UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

"ALMOST ISLANDS": A RESEARCH SYNTHESIS OF ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES IN CANADA AS METAPHORICAL ISLANDS

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe the geographic distribution of Aboriginal people who live in remote, isolated Aboriginal communities in Canada in terms of how geographic settings and features, particularly those that are characteristic of island dwellers, are related to and can impact aspects of culture and identity. Through this process, data was collected using a research synthesis, which allowed for a great deal of data from various sources to be analyzed, extracted, and coded. Based on this qualitative study, numerous geographic characteristics similar to those of islanders and islands emerged. Physically, islands and Aboriginal communities represent bounded, finite spaces that are located on the periphery and are impacted by isolation. These unique isolated areas allow for islanders and Aboriginal people to experience ethnic homogeneity and strong attachments to place, both of which allow for the preservation of culture and identity. That being said, islanders and Aboriginal people both experience migration as a way of life, and leaving their places of origin to experience life in larger, more diversely and densely populated areas is necessary for many. As a result of these findings, this study compares isolated Aboriginal communities in Canada and Aboriginal people to various small islands around the world as well as islanders, through various spatial metaphors.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to "my love," Jeff. You stuck with me through the good days, and more importantly, the bad ones. I shed many tears along the way, and there were times when I was ready to throw in the towel and step away from this thesis. You always believed in me, supported me, and told me that my research mattered. For that, I will always be truly thankful.

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Without geography, you're nowhere – Anonymous

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Introduction

When thinking of an island, one tends to envision an isolated, finite landmass surrounded by water; however, through nissology, the study of islands, scholars have noted that small islands are objects of representation (Baldacchino, 2005) and embody much more than "mere appendages to continents" (Nunn, 2004, p. 312). Grant McCall (1994), a notable island scholar, originally defined the term *nissology* in the title of an article as "the study of islands on their own terms" (p. 95). Through this unique interdisciplinary field, scholars have studied islands as tourist destinations (Baldacchino, 1997) and distinct homes to unique flora and fauna (Quamenn, 1996). They have also been used as the main setting or focus of various cultural productions such as art, literature, film, and other forms of media (Fletcher, 2011).[1] Additionally, scholars have also discussed islands as metaphors (Gillis, 2004). This metaphor represents the context in which islands have been implemented into my own research, which primarily involves Aboriginal people[2] and explored the unique geographies of Aboriginal communities in Canada.

Through this thesis, I describe the geographic parallels of small islands of the world and Aboriginal communities in Canada. It is a conceptual study about how Aboriginal communities in Canada, especially First Nations communities, share common features with islands, and can therefore be viewed as metaphorical islands. As a human geographer[3] and nissologist[4] who wears many academic hats (Baldacchino, 1997), I believe that islands, the mainlands adjacent to

[1] Cultural productions include artwork, literature, such as Robinson Crusoe, written by Daniel Defoe (1719/1998), and The Tempest, written by William Shakespeare (1610/2008). Films, such as Jaws (1975) and Castaway (2000), are both set on islands, and are based on the books written by Peter Benchley (1974/1991) and Defoe. Lastly, songs, such as Kokamo (1998), written by The Beach Boys, have been written about island paradises.
[2] For the purpose of this thesis, I use the encompassing term Aboriginal when referring to individuals of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis descent.
[3] Human Geography is a sub discipline of Geography in which the researcher's study various human characteristics as they stem from their geographic surroundings, such as culture and identity.
[4] The term nissologist refers to a scholar who studies islands.

them, and the waters that geographically bind islands and mainland areas together provide useful spatial metaphors within my own research. I also posit that the geographic similarities allow islanders and Aboriginal people to develop unique cultures and identities through various geographic processes.

In this introductory chapter, I begin by providing a geographic background of the research and then position myself in the research. I go on to discuss the purpose of the research, as well as my research questions. Then, I introduce the qualitative research methods employed in this study. I also introduce the sources of data that have been incorporated into my research, and conclude the chapter by providing an overview of my Master of Arts in Island Studies thesis.

Geographic Background of the Research

Geographers typically categorize spaces into three geographic settings: urban,[5] suburban,[6] and rural. [7] The geographies of Aboriginal people in Canada are often spoken of as living in two separate geographic locations: on-reserve, [8] and off-reserve.[9] Aboriginal communities are frequently located in rural areas that are also situated in isolated regions of the

[5] Urban areas are those that are more densely populated, have increased infrastructure, and in some cases, are defined as areas that are simply "not rural." These terms, as well as various other geographic terms important to the comprehension of this thesis, are defined further in Chapter 3.
[6] Suburban areas are located between urban and rural areas. They are thought to be an ideal living area for many people because they are not located directly within busy, urban areas, but individuals are still able to access transportation within these areas, unlike in rural settings.
[7] Rural areas can be defined as small, isolated places, with small, low-density populations, which are often located in the country, near natural resources and agriculture (MacGregor-Fors, 2011; Marzluff, Bowmen, and Donneley, 2001; Reimer, 2010; Statistics Canada, 2006 b; Woods, 2010, 2005)
[8] Traditionally, the term on-reserve refers only to 'status Indians,' recognized under the Indian Act (1876), who are more commonly referred to today as First Nations people.
[9] The term off-reserve refers to First Nations people who do not live in First Nations communities. It is also used to describe First Nations, Inuit and Métis people of Canada who are located in Métis settlements, Inuit communities, and also, in various other urban, suburban, and rural communities, located outside of their own communities.

country.[10] Similarly, many small islands are located in areas that are referred to as being geographically insular.[11] There are both benefits and hardships, which stem from living in rural, isolated areas of the world. Take, for example, the concept of *identity*. Edwards and Usher (2007) stated "location . . . is the place of identity and security" (p. 136) and "identity is secured through location and locating practices" (p. 136). As such, some scholars argue that, especially in small communities as well as on small islands, there is an exclusivity and remoteness, which can cause community members to feel a special sense of connection or safety within a small space. In turn, this point allows for residents of such a place to maintain a unique, more traditional culture, as well as individual and communal identity (Holm, 2000; Péron, 2003).

Scholars such as Bone (2009), Cardinal (2006), and Frideres and Gadacz (2008, 2011), have written about the closeness and cultural importance of Aboriginal people living in Aboriginal communities and how this shapes the identity of those people (Frideres, 2011; Howard & Proulx, 2011; Lobo & Peters, 2001; Peters, 2003, 2005a, 2009). Nissologists, such as Connell (2002), Pau'u (2002), and Royle (1999), have presented similar findings regarding migration and identity in their work focusing on islands and islanders. That special community feeling or feeling of belonging in such spaces, is often due to the small size of those locations and is based on what is referred to by some geographers as a "sense of place" (Bone, 2009, pp. 2 & 19).[12]

[10] Geographically, the term isolated refers to rural areas, which includes any and all territory lying outside of urban areas, but isolation, similar to 'sense of place', can be a psychological feeling. This term is expanded upon in chapter 3.

[11] The term insular is often used in the discipline of island studies when referring to isolated locations.

[12] In geography, we often talk about what is referred to as a sense of place. The term is used to note any special, sometimes emotional, feeling that individuals have pertaining to the location where they live. This feeling stems from personal and group experiences in the location. Sometimes these feelings are based on natural factors, other times, they can be the result of cultural factors, economic factors, or based on language and religion. This sense of place, regardless of its origin represents "a powerful psychological bond between people and their region" (Bone, 2009, p. 9).

The issue of how an islander or an Aboriginal person's individual and collective identities, as well as cultures, are shaped and influenced by various geographic settings has also been discussed by scholars. For example, outmigration to larger, more diversely populated areas, or even long-term daily commutes to and from city or mainland settings, can impact the identity and wellbeing of individuals (Cardinal, 2006; Connell, 2002; Corbett, 2005; Royle, 1999; Howard & Proulx, 2011; Lobo & Peters, 2001; Maron & Connell, 2008). Islanders and Aboriginal people alike share these spatial similarities; however, the similar physical and human geographic characteristics shared by islanders and Aboriginal people in Canada have yet to be addressed by scholars. Nonetheless, I believe that further research around the parallels of islanders and Aboriginal people, as well as their places of origin, has the potential to benefit both types of people and communities.

Positioning in the Research: Personal Background and Experiences

In many Indigenous cultures, positioning oneself at the beginning of a formal meeting is "a cultural tradition that serves to identify who you are and your connections to the broader community" (Koster, 2012, p. 196). Stemming from this idea and my respect for Indigenous protocols and methodologies (Absolon, 2011; Kovach, 2010; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2009), I will *position* myself using my own personal story about how I came to this research. In explaining my story, I attempt to build trust with the reader and decolonize the research (Absolon & Willett, 2005). Also, herein, I discuss many of the reasons associated with my curiosity regarding Aboriginal issues by separating them into two categories. Those categories are *Personal Interest*, in which I discuss the experience that first piqued my interest and awareness of Aboriginal people in Canada and their culture, and *Research Interest*, where I discuss my education and academic experience as a geographer, both of which have led to a continued

interest in this topic, and have caused me to continuously focus my research on the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

Personal Interest

Throughout my undergraduate and graduate education, I have often been asked why, as a non-Aboriginal person, am I interested in issues pertaining to Aboriginal peoples in Canada? As a nissologist and human geographer who was born and raised in a small, rural town located on the mainland, I admit that I have become increasingly fascinated by culture, identity, community, and how these are affected by geography, whether island-related or otherwise. The geographic factors that influence culture and identity often stem from what human geographers refer to as *place*. My interest in Aboriginal issues, in general, however, started much earlier than my love of geography and interest in nissology.

In 2004, I travelled to Red Lake, located in northwestern Ontario,[13] to visit my aunt who had lived in the area for a number of years. I had no idea what to expect. At that time, I thought that I was travelling to what seemed like *the middle of nowhere*. I anticipated having a boring vacation in a small, rural, isolated, gold-mining town situated in the Boreal Forest. Little did I know, however, that the experience would open my eyes and transform my life in the years to come.

During this visit with my aunt, I had several new experiences which included: swimming in the northern waters of the Bruce Channel and walleye fishing with an Ojibway woman who was a fishing guide in Trout Lake, a place she had lived all of her life. Of course, I had been swimming in a lake before. I also used to fish with my grandfather ("Grampa") when I was

[13] The Red Lake district is now home to close to 4,500 people with over 500 of those community members identifying themselves as Aboriginal (Statistics Canada, 2011b).

younger and had previously gone canoeing in the Kennibecasis River with my aunt in my hometown of Sussex, New Brunswick. Nonetheless, there was something different about the experiences I had in Red Lake. It seemed exceptionally calm and peaceful there. It was empowering to build a fire and wash the fish that I had caught earlier that day in the same waters in which they swam, just before cooking them on that same fire that I had helped to create.

There was one thing that I had not experienced before travelling to Red Lake though and that was attending a powwow. We travelled several hours to get to the powwow site at Eagle River, Ontario. Looking back, I realize that I took the experience for granted, but, at the same time, I remember appreciating the land and feeling a closeness to that special place.[14] I thought the food was wonderful at the powwow; I can still remember the warm bannock (Indian fried bread) being placed in my hands. I enjoyed the crafts and thought that they were so beautiful, delicate, and unique. I found the culture that I was suddenly immersed in very interesting; yet, I found it a bit strange to see people dancing in their traditional clothing, otherwise known as regalia. To this day, I can still remember hearing the sound of the jingle dresses from all those years ago. Although taken aback and slightly overwhelmed, I really enjoyed the experience of attending that powwow and now, with more life experience, knowledge, and understanding, I realize how beautiful and spiritually important the Aboriginal ceremony of the powwow is, even for those who are non-Aboriginal. Almost 10 years later, I realize the significant impact that the powwow at Eagle River has continued to have on my life. I believe that this event is where I began to evolve into a human geographer, even though I would not be aware of that term until several years after visiting that powwow site.

[14] I consciously refer to this location as a *special place* because it truly influenced who I am today and why I am so interested in aspects of human geography, such as culture and identity. I believe that this place and the memories that I associate with it will always remain an important part of who I am.

Research Interest

My interest in geography and Aboriginal issues grew while completing my undergraduate studies at Mount Allison University in the town of Sackville, New Brunswick. My schooling in the small, rural town of Sussex, New Brunswick did not include Aboriginal history. It was not until I enrolled in an independent study course during my final year at Mount Allison that I was able to fully explore my interest in Aboriginal studies. This opportunity led to my discovering the impact that geography has on Aboriginal people, not only in Canada, but worldwide. From that point on, I have been researching and experiencing everything that I can about Aboriginal people in Canada, as well as their cultures. These ongoing experiences have cemented my beliefs regarding geography and Aboriginal people in Canada, and this point is the main reason why I continue to research such issues today.

When I initially arrived at the University of Prince Edward Island, my research interests stemming from my academic interests while attending Mount Allison University, included how geography affected Aboriginal perspectives relating to climate change. The study sites I had chosen included two First Nations communities in Prince Edward Island: Scotchfort and Lennox Island. However, upon discussing those ideas with Aboriginal coworkers, it was explained to me that climate change, although important, was not necessarily something that they wanted to have researched in their communities.[15] Over time, I reflected on this experience and realized that the main reason I was interested in research involving climate change was because I had not been

[15] The reason that I shared my interests with my coworkers and was willing to adapt my project was due to the fact that research in sometimes not welcomed by Aboriginal communities (Absolon, 2011; Koster, 2012; Kovach, 2010; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2009) because Aboriginal people have been taken for granted. In many communities, the term research is classified as "the dirtiest word in the Indigenous world's vocabulary" (Smith, 1999, pp. 1–2) because non-Aboriginal people have used Aboriginal research foci for personal benefits, and also, due to the fact that Western worldviews are very different to those of the Indigenous (Absolon, 2011; Haluza-De-Lay, 2009; Koster, 2012). I wanted to ensure that if my thesis was going to involve Aboriginal people and/or communities that it was going to be beneficial to those communities and welcomed by those communities.

educated in the many other geographic issues that impacted Aboriginal people. I concluded that I wanted to further expand my knowledge regarding the impact that geography has on Aboriginal people. I proposed to interview young adults who identified as being Aboriginal and had family ties to the Aboriginal communities located in Scotchfort and Lennox Island. In doing so, I had hoped to gain their perspectives regarding how geographic issues such as mobility, isolation,[16] and urbanization had impacted their lives and identities as Aboriginal people. Unfortunately, I was not granted ethics approval from all parties involved and was unable to conduct interviews for my research. Undeterred, I chose to continue to pursue a similar project focusing on the existing data regarding the discipline of Aboriginal geography and exploring the geographic similarities between small islands and small Aboriginal communities.

Purpose of my Research and Research Questions

My research interests include how geographic settings are related to and can impact aspects of culture and identity. Scholars have suggested that most Aboriginal communities are commonly located in isolated, rural areas, and that, quite often, in order to access services or gain employment, those people are required to migrate to urban areas. Interestingly, residents of small islands often move to mainland areas for those same reasons. Through out-migration, and the shift from a setting in which one is part of a majority to a setting where one becomes part of a minority, Aboriginal people and islanders alike struggle to fit into urban/mainland areas, and, in some cases, their places of origin should they choose to return home at some point.

[16] The term isolation is often used by scholars when speaking about Aboriginal peoples and communities in Canada.

Purpose of the Research

Through the aforementioned broad area of inquiry and personal awareness regarding the impact of geography on Aboriginal people in Canada, as well as islanders around the world, the purpose of this research has been fine-tuned *to describe the geographic distribution of Aboriginal people who live in remote, isolated Aboriginal communities in Canada in terms of how geographic settings and features, particularly those that are characteristic of island dwellers, are related to and can impact aspects of culture and identity.*

Research Questions

In order to address the purpose of my research, I attempted to answer the following four research questions:

(1) *How do geographic settings and features, particularly as they pertain to islands, relate to Aboriginal people who live in remote Aboriginal communities?*

(2) *How does the isolation that some Aboriginal people experience while living in remote Aboriginal communities influence the culture and identity of individuals living in those locations?*

(3) *How does mobility and the migration of Aboriginal people away from isolated Aboriginal communities and into non-Aboriginal communities that are more urban in nature, influence their sense of culture and identity?*

(4) *What parallels exist between island living and living in an isolated Aboriginal community?*

Using the anthropological framework of cultural theory, and the popular theoretical concept of roots and routes, I attempted to respond to the research by analyzing and interpreting a great deal

of data through qualitative research methods referred to as *research synthesis* and *document analysis*.

Theoretical Considerations

This research uses the anthropological ideologies of cultural theory. As Crang (1998) posited, culture, whether recognized by individuals on a daily basis or not, is part of our everyday lives and gives meaning to those lives. It has been defined in over 150 different ways (Crang, 1998) and has been discussed at great lengths by scholars such as Geertz (1973), Keesling (1974), Williams (1976), and Douglas (1966). Once said to be located "in the minds and hearts of men" (Goodenough as cited in Geertz, 1973, p. 11), culture can no longer be regarded simply as a learned behavior that makes the population human (Keesing, 1974). Instead, it is much more. A society's culture "consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members" (Geertz, 1973, p. 11), and, if an individual follows a culture and learns the ways of said culture, they have the potential to successfully pass for a member of a community (Williams as cited in Geertz, 1973). For Aboriginal people and islanders who choose to migrate from their places of origin, the ability to learn of a culture and integrate into it can be very beneficial. However, it can no longer be said that culture and identity stem from only one place, nor do they remain constant. In this sense, culture and identity can be seen as a living process that can shift and change through individual and communal actions, thoughts, and values (Corbett, 2005). This point is an integral part of the roots and routes debate (DeLoughrey, 2007; Gustafson, 2001; Whimp, 2008), or the roots/routes perspective. The concept of roots (referring to place) and routes (referring to mobility and migration) has been incorporated into this research as a theoretical consideration.

As Gustafson (2001) explained, the term *roots* has been used by Western society as a metaphor for place attachment. In this instance *roots* refers to the physical environment and is used to represent security, home, community, and attachment. In using the term in such a manner, roots signify the link between people and places, as well as identity and territory, with emotional bonds to the surrounding physical environment and local community. For over a decade, however, scholars have suggested that an individual's attachment to place, people, and culture can also be thought of in terms of migration or *routes* (Clifford, Gilroy, and Hall in Gustafson, 2001). The concept of *routes* stems from the mobility of individuals, various encounters that they experience during a period of migration, and mixtures of knowledge and values. In this sense, the term routes is used to represent personal growth, knowledge, experience, and the physical environment is less important. The exchanges that take place come in various forms, such as: permanent or temporary migration, tourism, and the exchange of cultural artifacts (Gustafson, 2001).

Gustafson (2001) suggested that most geographical researchers believe in one of two theories: place attachment or mobility. Some scholars, myself included, thought that the bond with place was crucial for "individual well-being and for social cohesion" (Gustafson, 2001, p. 668). Conversely, mobility has also been regarded as a deviation that was "associated with uprooted individuals and lacking social integration" (p. 668). More contemporary views of these theories challenge such presumptions, and now many social theorists argue that social relationships, as well as individual experiences due to increasing mobility and the expansion of information and communication technologies, are becoming disconnected from specific places (Albrow; Calhoun; Giddens; and Meyrowitz, as cited in Gustafson, 2001; DeLoughrey, 2007; Donaldson, n.d.; Whimp, 2008). This point is not to say, however, that being disconnected from

place leads to individuals lacking a sense of culture or identity. Instead, the theory of roots and routes suggests that experiences from various geographic settings allow for individuals to maintain a much more unique identity and culture than those who do remain in one place.

Gustafson (2001) noted that Hall (1995) proposed a movement from roots to routes was taking place in the early 1990s, while Clifford (1997) and Gilroy (1993) expressed their belief that roots and routes could be intertwined to understand the relationship between people, culture, and place. Typically used to discuss the manner in which people and places are related to culture, the roots/routes perspective focuses on many aspects of my own research, including ethnicity, minority politics, diaspora, and identity. Using the qualitative method of research synthesis, the roots/routes perspective has been incorporated to analyze the shifts and losses in the culture and identity of islanders and Aboriginal people.

Method of Research and Sources of Data

Analyzing the existing literature is a central part of most types of research, whether the research is qualitative or quantitative in nature. A literature review provides scholars with rich background knowledge and familiarity about those events, which influence their own research. There are instances, however, where research consists solely of a literature review, which is what I have provided via this thesis. This type of method is referred to as a qualitative research synthesis (Glass, 1976) and also employs the action of document analysis.

The Method of Research Synthesis

Qualitative research synthesis, more commonly known amongst quantitative researchers as meta-analysis or meta-synthesis, allows the researcher to analyze and interpret a large amount of data from various sources. For this particular research, all sources were coded thematically

based on the method of analysis, similar to the way that interview transcripts would be coded if a researcher were to involve human participants.

Sources of Data Incorporated Into the Research

The data analyzed through research synthesis and document analysis in this thesis research comes from four main sources. These include: informal sources; organizational non-peer reviewed reports; peer-reviewed sources from journals; and formal sources. By incorporating a wide variety of sources, a great deal of data was analyzed, all of which pertained to Aboriginal communities in Canada and islands, as well as the aforementioned factors associated with geography that impact their lives.[17] More information relating to the chosen method(s) employed in this research, as well as the types of sources incorporated in this study, can be found in Chapter 2.

Overview of the Research

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I introduced the topic of my research while also identifying the purpose of the research and stating the research questions involved in this study. I provided a brief geographic background of the research and also positioned myself in the research. Along with this information, I presented the method that I chose to employ, research synthesis, while analyzing the data, and also listed the various sources that have been incorporated into the research.

In Chapter 2, "Methods of Research and Sources of Data," the method of analysis that was employed in the research, formally known amongst qualitative researchers as *research*

[17] The aforementioned factors included isolation, insularity, migration, mobility, place, space, and their influences on culture and identity.

synthesis, is explained in greater detail by providing a background to the method, as well as positive and negative aspects of the method, as it relates to this particular research. The sources of data are also expanded upon within this chapter and specific examples of each source are provided. The screening and coding criteria that I developed to extract potential datum are also located in this chapter.

In Chapter 3, "Definition of Terms and Geographic Background of the Research," I introduce and define various terms pertaining to Aboriginal people, islanders, Aboriginal communities, and islands, as well as geographic terms important to this study, such as *rural*, *urban*, *urbanization*, *mobility*, *migration*, *isolation*, *insularity*, *remoteness*, *access*, and *community*. In addition, I introduce and define terms influenced by human geography, such as *culture*, and *identity*. Geographic backgrounds relating to Aboriginal people in Canada are provided, as well as the geographic dispersion of various Aboriginal populations in Canada. Some of this information is illustrated through various charts, graphs, and maps, with comparisons drawn to non-Aboriginal Canadians and island geographies where necessary. These figures and tables provide the reader with geographic knowledge that is important to the thematic research findings of the research, as well as the discussion and conclusion provided by the researcher in the final chapter.

Following the definitions for key terms, and the geographic background of the research, the thematic findings of the research are presented in Chapter 4. This chapter is titled "Thematic Findings of the Research" and is separated into four sections based on the research questions that were introduced earlier in this chapter. Those sections are titled: (1) *Geographic Settings and Features of Small Islands and Remote Aboriginal Communities*, (2) *The Impact of Isolation on*

Aboriginal Culture and Identity, (3) *The Impact of Mobility and Migration on Aboriginal Culture and Identity*, and (4) *The Parallels of Island Living and Living in an Aboriginal Community*.

Upon providing the thematic findings of the research, the results are explained in Chapter 5 "Discussion and Conclusion." In this chapter, I respond to the four research questions and thematic findings that resulted, discuss the implications of my findings in relation to cultural theory and the idea that roots and routes are both responsible for shifts in culture and identity, and address gaps that I have found within the research. Lastly, I conclude this thesis by stating questions for future research and provide a final reflection on the research and my findings.

CHAPTER 2 – METHOD OF RESEARCH AND SOURCES OF DATA

Introduction

As mentioned previously, analyzing the existing literature related to a specific research topic is ordinarily a part of all research, whether the research is qualitative or quantitative. The reason for writing a literature review is to present the reader with knowledge, ideas, and results of past research pertaining to an established topic. Another important reason to conduct a literature review is to identify the strengths, limitations, and thematic highlights within a collection of literature. Although most literature reviews are intended to relate directly to a specific research purpose and research questions, there are instances where research consists solely of a literature review. This type of qualitative research method, which has been employed in this thesis, is known among qualitative researchers as a *research synthesis* (Bickman & Rog, 2009).

In this chapter, I discuss where the concept of research synthesis as a form of research originated, followed by the stages involved in this method. I then provide the positive and negative aspects associated with this method and present my own reasons for choosing to employ this type of qualitative method. Upon providing this information, I then explain how this method was employed in my own research and provide the screening and extraction criteria that I used, which ultimately led to my thematic findings.

The Beginnings of Research Synthesis

In 1904, the first research synthesis was conducted by Karl Pearson who synthesized the evidence relating to a vaccine against typhoid (Cooper, Patall, & Lindsay, 2009; Littell, Corcoran, & Pillai, 2008). It was not until the 1970s, however, after G.V. Glass (1976) used the

method and formally described it as "the analysis of analyses" (p. 3), that the method gained recognition and popularity. In 1971, Kenneth Feldman published an article entitled "Using the Work of Others: Some Observations on Reviewing and Integrating." In this article, Feldman wrote "Systematically reviewing and integrating . . . the literature of a field may be considered a type of research in its own right – one using a characteristic set of research techniques and methods" (p. 86). This research method was more commonly known among scholars at that time as *meta-analysis* (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2010), and it essentially involved analyzing, evaluating, and integrating published and unpublished research into a project. In contemporary qualitative research, this type of method is now more commonly referred to as *meta-synthesis* (Boeiji, 2009), *systematic review* (Littell, Corcoran, & Pillai, 2008), or *research synthesis* (Bickman & Rog, 2009).

Regardless of the term associated with the method, this type of analysis is known as a distinct category of synthesis in which results from completed qualitative studies in a specific area are formally combined, analyzed, interpreted and reflected upon (Bickman & Rog, 2009; Boeiji, 2009; Gewurtz, Stergiou-Kita, Shaw, Kirsh, & Rappolt, 2008; Littell, Corcoran, & Pillai, 2008; McCormick, Rodney, & Varcoe, 2003; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). As a point of clarification and also for consistency purposes, I use the contemporary term *research synthesis* to identify my research method.

The Stages of Research Synthesis

According to Paterson, Thorne, Canam, and Jillings (2001), there are four stages of research synthesis: meta-theory, meta-method, meta-data-analysis, and meta-synthesis. The first stage involves defining the variables of interest both conceptually and operationally. Secondly,

the researcher must clearly state the relationship of interest, while also deciding on the types of sources to include in the research. The main stage of research synthesis involves examining previous literature, as well as other types of sources, whether they are voice recordings, video recordings, or photographs/sketches, in order to determine whether they have been contaminated by any factors irrelevant to the problem being researched (Paterson et al., 2001). Lastly, the researcher must integrate all of the reports that have been collected into one unified statement about the research problem (Cooper, Patall, & Lindsay, 2009; Littell, Corcoran, & Pillai, 2008; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). In my own research, to complete the final stage of this method, I created various extraction tables to aid in the screening, coding, and extracting process. This information can be found in the latter sections of this chapter, in which I discuss the five stages that I created for screening and extracting data.

The Positive and Negative Attributes of Research Synthesis

As with all research methods, research synthesis has many positive attributes, but there are also some negative characteristics that must be taken into consideration before choosing to employ this particular method. This portion of the thesis expands upon the positive and negative aspects of employing research synthesis for the purpose of conducting qualitative research.

Positive Aspects of Research Synthesis

Qualitative researchers often seek to interview or survey participants in an attempt to understand and explain "the world from a participant's point of view, by listening to or observing a person in a natural environment" (Miller & Alvarado, 2005, p. 348). When using only literature-related documents within a study, the researcher is positioned at a distance from actual participants. This act has caused researchers to underutilize documents when conducting

qualitative research (Miller & Alvarado, 2005), which is unfortunate because there are many positive aspects associated with conducting a study that solely employs the analysis of documents. Rudestam and Newton (2007) stated, "There is no reason why a carefully conducted [research synthesis] could not serve as a suitable dissertation" (p. 56) and also noted that one of the benefits of research synthesis, is that it provides readers with "a much richer understanding . . . than any single study can offer" (p. 56).

By analyzing documents through research synthesis, researchers are able to efficiently gather data in a way that requires less time *collecting* the data, because the data are simply *selected* based on screening and excluding criteria (Bowen, 2009; Miller and Alvarado, 2005). Along with the efficiency of this method, there is also the convenience of *availability* and *accessibility* of the data. The majority of the documents used in research synthesis are open to the public and also come in a multitude of formats. Documents incorporated into research synthesis include books and brochures; diaries, journals and letters; maps, charts, and graphs; newspapers; radio and television scripts; organizational and institutional reports; survey data; and public records (Bowen, 2009). Data stemming from such documents can include excerpts, quotations, or even entire passages. These pieces of data provide the researcher with a great deal of material to analyze and interpret and can eventually be organized by theme or category (Labuschagne, 2003). Along with this point and given that there are no human participants involved in a study based on research synthesis and document analysis, this method also eliminates complications that can arise from human participation, such as the need to gain ethics approval, select a proper sample size and venue, and causing unforeseen harm, as well as successfully maintaining anonymity and confidentiality.

Along with the aforementioned benefits of research synthesis, this qualitative method is also very cost effective (Bowen, 2009), because there is little to no travel involved, and there is typically no necessary equipment, such as voice recorders, that need to be purchased (Bowen, 2009). Also, the data incorporated into studies involving research synthesis have already been gathered by various individuals from a multitude of academic disciplines; the researcher is not required to speak directly to participants, and therefore, the researcher does not affect or alter the study in any way (Bowen, 2009; Littell, Corcoran, & Pillai, 2008). Along with this point, due to the fact that the data are typically available to the public, exact names, references, and details of events can be published in the research, which analyzes previously published or unpublished documents (Bowen, 2009). It is for these reasons that qualitative research synthesis is a valuable method of data analysis. However, as with most other methods, employing a research synthesis does have some negative characteristics that need to be taken into consideration, as well.

Negative Aspects of Research Synthesis

Koro-Ljungberg, Cavalleria, Covert, and Bustamb (2012) wrote that many scholars have argued that data analysis is one of the most difficult aspects of the qualitative research process. Although "There are significant advantages in being able to draw on qualitative data across a number of studies that … cannot be realized in single studies" (McCormick, Rodney, & Varcoe, 2003, p. 936), undertaking research by employing a method such as research synthesis can prove difficult for some researchers. In the past, this method had been referred to as "vague and not particularly illuminating …" (Paterson et al., 2001, p. 23). This qualitative method sometimes suffers due to a lack of detail in the data that other scholars have collected, and the success of this method is dependent upon the scope of topic chosen by the initial researchers (Bowen, 2009; Littell, Corcoran, & Pillai, 2008). In some instances, there may not be enough data to provide

researchers with sufficient detail to answer their own research questions, and the research questions involved in the data being analyzed are likely to be different than those posed by the researcher. Furthermore, there can sometimes be an issue accessing data (Bowen, 2009), or, as was the case in this thesis research, some of the data collected had to be accessed using interlibrary loans. In this instance, it takes a longer period of time to gain access to certain documents. Although there are instances where irretrievability can be an issue, depending on the topic or product that is at the core of the research topic and purpose of the research, for the most part, documents are easily obtainable for the researcher.

Additionally, there are some instances when the method of research synthesis can be influenced by bias. This statement is especially noted within funded research projects (Littell, Corcoran, & Pillai, 2008), as well as studies relating to policies, procedures, and organizations (Bowen, 2009). Nonetheless, Bowen (2009) also noted that many of the negative characteristics of research synthesis are "really potential flaws rather than major disadvantages" to this approach (p. 32). He further stated that the advantages of this particular method "clearly outweigh the limitations" (p. 32). Like Bowen, I agree that this type of qualitative research method has some potential flaws, but I believe that it is a very useful method for qualitative researchers to employ when wanting to research a broad area of inquiry using a wide range of sources, from several academic disciplines.

Rationale for Selecting Research Synthesis for This Research

Research synthesis was used as the methodology of choice in the context of this research largely because of the aforementioned benefits, such as being able to incorporate a large amount of data from various types of sources, as well as having the ability to combine various studies

related to two geographic areas into my own thesis. I also knew that the drawbacks of this method could be mitigated, because my research involved a broad area of inquiry and was interdisciplinary. As such, I was able to access an adequate amount of data and also allowed myself sufficient time to access the required data. Furthermore, because I reviewed a large amount of data pertaining to the research topic, I limited the amount of bias that could have potentially influenced my study. Thus, I was able to work around my field work restrictions by employing this method. In doing so, I was able to assess and evaluate not only research regarding Aboriginal geography, but also the literature pertaining to island geography. I was also able to incorporate and evaluate data in a way that provided a space and place for Aboriginal people and island studies to be represented in my thesis, which was the ultimate goal of undertaking this research.

Boeije (2009) stated, "In qualitative research, [research synthesis] is a well-known approach in which results of previous studies are examined, critically reflected upon and re-calculated to consider and extend the range of existing knowledge" (p. 154). By approaching my research through research synthesis, I performed what Boeije described as meta-analysis for qualitative research. Using a qualitative research method, I examined and explained the impact that geography has on Aboriginal people in Canada, as well as the commonalities relating to spatial geography of islands and Aboriginal communities in Canada. I was able to combine existing literature relating to the aforementioned geographic factors associated with Aboriginality in Canada, as well as the geography of islands, and evaluate their commonalities using not only the lens of a human geographer, but also a nissological lens. This research design and its results identified gaps in the existing literature and emphasized the importance of research pertaining not only to the discipline of Aboriginal geography, but also to how island studies can

be used to evaluate other communities and cultures. In the following section, I discuss the types of sources incorporated into my research as well as my selection process.

Source Types and Selection Process

The data analyzed for this thesis research originated from four main sources. These sources consisted of: informal sources (e.g., newspapers and websites); organizational non-peer reviewed reports (e.g., government documents and survey data); peer-reviewed sources (e.g., books, chapters in books, and journals.); and, formal sources (e.g., books, textbooks, and other published documents). By incorporating this variety of sources, I was able to analyze a great deal of data pertaining to Aboriginal people in Canada, geographic issues that they face based on community locations, along with parallels that could be drawn between small island and Aboriginal community issues stemming from geography. The specific criteria for the data incorporated into this study can be found in the section of this chapter titled *The Five Stages of Screening and Extracting the Data*. By integrating data from a wide variety of sources many opinions and perspectives were included in the research, from such academic disciplines as anthropology, sociology, nissology, and various sub-disciplines of geography, such as Aboriginal geography and human geography. The types of sources incorporated into this study are further explained in the following subsections.

Informal Sources Included in the Research

The informal sources that were incorporated into this research included newspapers, websites, and magazines. These sources focused on the integration of Aboriginal issues into my thesis and were written by or about Aboriginal people. Television documentaries from the National Film Board of Canada, along with one television series in particular, *8th Fire*, provided

valuable contemporary data regarding Aboriginal issues in Canada, especially within an urban context. These sources allowed for the incorporation of an Aboriginal perspective into the research. Newspapers were also incorporated as they provided a contemporary Aboriginal perspectives regarding geographic issues. Primarily Aboriginal newspapers were used, such as: *First Nations Drum*, *Turtle Island News*, and *Saskatchewan Sage*. Various magazines written for and by Aboriginal people were also drawn upon, such as *First Nations Voice*, *New Tribe Magazine*, and *Windspeaker*. These newspapers and magazines, however, were used largely as works consulted and were not directly employed within the research itself. Instead, they provided the researcher with general, contemporary background knowledge.

The focus in academia is often to use formal, peer-reviewed sources to ensure research credibility, yet, reviewing informal sources, such as Aboriginal newspapers, websites, magazines, and films, was critical to this study. Without those sources, it would have been very difficult to include a proper space and place for the representation of Aboriginal people in my research. Through these unconventional sources, I was able to read and listen to the opinion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, while further educating myself regarding the many issues that Aboriginal people in Canada face on-reserve, as well as in other areas of the country.

Organizational Non-Peer Reviewed Reports Included in the Research

The organizational non-peer reviewed reports, which were analyzed in this research included various government documents pertaining to islands, indigenous islanders, and Aboriginal people, as well as materials from First Nations communities, various reports and surveys from Aboriginal organizations, and, finally, organizations representing islands. These particular sources provided a meta-view of the issues involved in the topic. As part of the

research synthesis employed in this project, it was both necessary and valuable to evaluate and analyze governmental and non-governmental sources, because they provided information pertaining to populations of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada. This process also allowed for a cross-provincial comparison in some cases. These materials also proved useful when defining terms and provided information relating to geographic factors, such as places of origin, recognized degrees of isolation within Canada, and mobility and migration patterns of islanders and Aboriginal people.

Peer Reviewed Sources Included in the Research

Peer reviewed sources were important to the research, because they allowed for the incorporation of work by people who are experts in their respective fields. A significant focus of the peer reviewed sources involving Aboriginal data revolved around Aboriginal geography, Aboriginal migration issues in Canada, and identity politics stemming from migration. The focus of peer-reviewed work relating to island studies revolved around island geographies, migration, mobility, and identity politics stemming from movement. As part of my analysis of these articles, special attention was given to gaps within the literature, disagreements among scholars, and the emergence of topical themes.

Other Formal Sources Incorporated into the Research

Books regarding island and Aboriginal geography, specifically issues stemming from rural to urban or island to mainland migration of Aboriginal people in Canada and islanders were also included through the formal sources incorporated into my research. Many of these books provided the researcher with background information, while others provided data that were

extracted and coded for the purpose of analysis and ultimately used to respond to the research questions introduced in Chapter 1.

Criteria for Analyzing and Coding the Data

When conducting my literature review, I drew upon the techniques used by various scholars, such as Saldana (2008) and Littell, Corcoran, and Pillai (2008) to analyze and code the data collected. In general, coding in qualitative research often includes a word or a short phrase, which is symbolic to the research being undertaken (Saldana, 2008). This process is how I chose to code my own qualitative data, as well. These data, as mentioned previously in this chapter, can include information from transcripts, field notes, journals, documents, literature, artifacts, photos, videos, websites, and emails (Saldana, 2008). In my research, I put the data collected through five stages of screening and extraction, as is detailed in the following subsections of this chapter.

The 5 Stages of Screening and Extracting the Data

The analysis of my data followed criteria similar to that laid out by Littell, Corcoran, and Pillai (2008). In order to choose the data that were to be incorporated into the research, materials were screened and extracted based on five stages: (a) initial screening of data; (b) second-level screening of data based on eligibility criteria; (c) criteria for extracting data; (d) thematic outcomes of materials; and, (e) discussion and conclusions. Each of these stages are represented in the flow chart below to illustrate the linear method of screening, extracting, and coding the data that was included in my research.

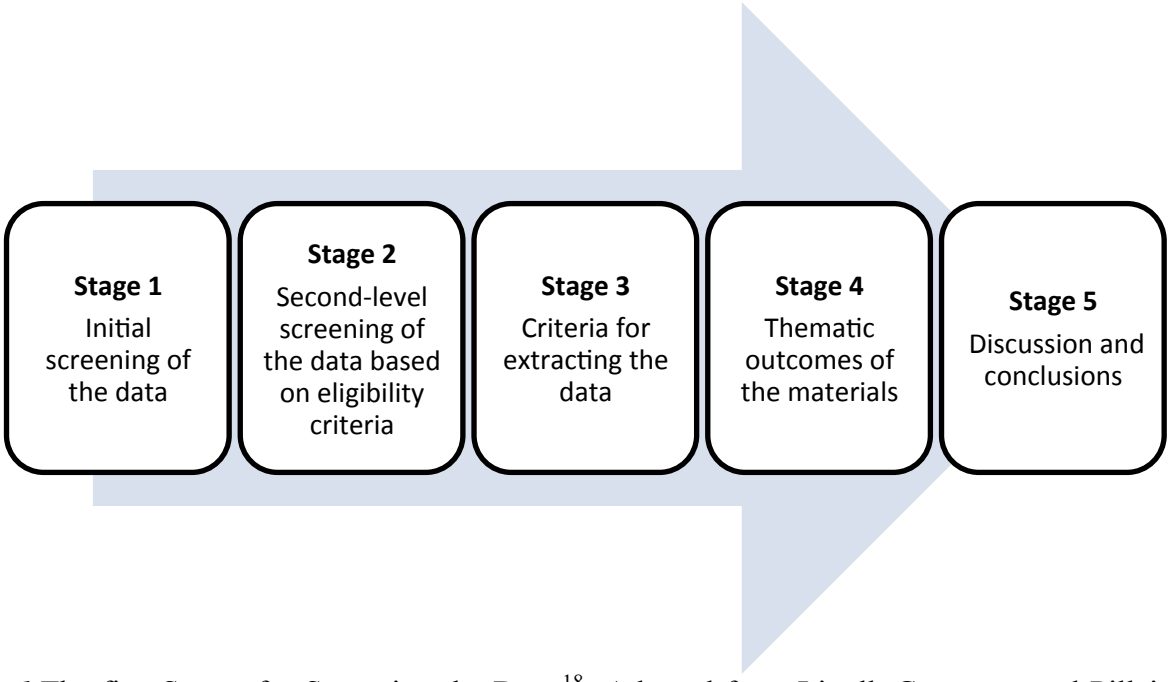

Figure 1.The five Stages for Screening the Data.[18] Adapted from Littell, Corcoran, and Pillai (2008).

Littell, Corcoran, and Pillai (2008) suggested creating extraction tables to aid in the organization of the screening and extraction process. Therefore, I created the following extraction tables based on the recommendations and examples that they provide in the Appendix of their book "Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis." The questions developed and employed during the screening and extraction process were established by me, based on the example criteria that were provided by Littell, Corcoran, and Pillai (2008). While reading each source, I highlighted key words, phrases, or entire paragraphs that fit specific criteria which were later extracted and coded. Those key words and phrases can be viewed in the various stages of analysis, which are further explained below.

[18] These stages are explained in the following subsections, and the extraction tables created to screen, extract, and code the data.

Stage 1 - Initial screening: Criteria question and action. In Stage 1 of the process of research synthesis, an initial screening of the data was conducted, which consisted of responding to three questions regarding the materials that were reviewed. In this initial screening, I looked for any type of source that spoke to the various aspects of geography that were to be included in this study. This process included general information regarding geography of Aboriginal people and communities in Canada, as well as geographic information regarding islanders and various islands of the world. The geographic factors for which I screened (as mentioned in chapter 1) included *rural*, *urban*, *urbanization*, *mobility*, *migration*, *isolation*, *insularity*, *remoteness*, *access*, and *community*, as well as terms influenced by human geography, such as *culture*, and *identity*. This screening also included information related to population counts, because such information was provided by Statistics Canada in relation to rural and urban Aboriginal populations in Canada.

The questions posed during the initial screening of the data, as well as the options for responding to them are highlighted In Table 1.

Table 1

Initial Screening: Criteria Question and Action

Stage 1	
Criteria Question	**Action**
1. Is this material about geographic aspects of Aboriginal people in Canada or small islands of the world?	Yes: Continue to read the source. No: Eliminate the source.
2. What *type* of source is this?	Informal Non-peer reviewed organizational report Peer-reviewed article Other

3. What *is* this source?	Original study Review of other studies Editorial or book review Survey Interview Other

By screening documents using this initial screening table, I eliminated any outliers and was able to remain focused on the purpose of the research in a very broad sense. In stage 2 of the screening process, I re-evaluated the sources with criteria that were more specific to my research. In doing so, some sources were eliminated, while other sources began to be labelled so as to begin an initial coding process.

Stage 2 - Second-level screening based on eligibility criteria. Stage 2 of the analysis, Second-level Screening based on Eligibility Criteria, involved responding to four more eligibility questions. In this stage of the screening process, the materials were evaluated based on more specific information, such as whether the source involved a certain group of Aboriginal people in Canada (i.e., First Nation, Inuit, or Métis), or whether it included people who lived on islands, in rural communities, in First Nation communities, or, conversely, islanders who lived on the mainland, or Aboriginal people in urban areas of Canada. In labeling sources with this specific information, the data became increasingly tailored to the purpose of research and the geographic concepts that would eventually become themes, began to emerge. The criteria questions that were asked and the actions taken in this stage included:

Table 2

Second-level Screening Based on Eligibility Criteria

Stage 2	
Criteria Question	**Action**
1. Does this study include information pertaining to a specific group of Aboriginal people in Canada, or a specific Island?	Yes: Continue to read the source and label as *First Nation*, *Inuit*, *Métis*, or with the name of the *island(s)* involved. No: Continue with the source, and label as *general Aboriginal info* or *general island info*.
2. Does this study speak to Aboriginal people who have had experiences living in a First Nations community, Aboriginal community, or islanders who speak about living on islands?	Yes: Continue to read the source and label the source as *on-reserve*, *rural*, or *island*, depending on the information provided in the source. No: Continue with the source.
3. Does this study include Aboriginal people who have had an urban experience or have lived in an area more urban-in-nature, [19] or islanders who live or have lived in mainland locations?	Yes: Continue to read the source and label the source as *urban Aboriginal* or *mainland islander.* No: Continue to read the source.
4. Does the primary issue involved in this study pertain to any of the following: *rural, urban, rurality, urbanization, mobility, migration, isolation, insularity, access, remoteness, community, culture, identity*?	Yes: Continue to read the source and label with the corresponding geographic term(s). No: If the source does not involve Aboriginal people, islanders, Aboriginal communities, or islands, as well as geographic aspects of either type of people or landmass, discard the source.

[19] The term urban experience, in this context, refers to having lived in an urban area for any amount of time, whether it be long-term, short-term, permanent, or temporarily.

This second screening allowed for the elimination of sources that emerged as being inappropriate for my study. From here, I was able to narrow the research further and also begin to identify primary themes, which were further evaluated and then extracted during the third stage of this process.

Stage 3 - Criteria for extracting the data. In the third stage of this process, titled Criteria for Extracting the Data, I began to extract data from the existing sources, which were screened through the first two stages of this process. The information in this third stage included specific words, quotations, and paragraphs that had been highlighted during the first two stages. These data led to my discovering of the geographic commonalities between Aboriginal people in Canada and islanders of the world. The following five questions were asked while extracting these pieces of data:

Table 3

Criteria for Extracting the Data

Stage 3	
Criteria Question	**Action**
1. Which country(ies) were involved in the study?	Name the country.
2. Did the study involve specific regions of the country?	Yes: Continue to read the source and give specific details regarding the location where possible. No: Continue with the source.
3. What was the geographic setting or feature of the study involved in the source?	Select all that apply: rural/urban/on-reserve/off-reserve/island/mainland/isolation/insularity/migration/ mobility[20]
4. Was there a certain sample of people that were involved in the data?	Yes: Continue to read the source, and indicate what the sample size was.

[20] Although a similar question was asked in stage two of this process (question 4), in this section all settings that apply to the study were selected so as to group information together further.

5. What were the themes involved in this source?	No: Continue reading the source Create a list of all apparent themes and label each one on the source.

Based on this stage, I was able to begin extracting data related to specific Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal people in Canada, islanders, and specific islands. As this point, the geographic concepts involved in each source were identified, and I was able to divide the data that had been extracted based on the common themes that had emerged.

Stage 4 - Thematic outcomes of the materials. By stage 4, titled, Thematic Outcomes of the Materials, I was aware of all themes that existed within the data collected. Those themes included: boundaries, finite areas, isolation, remoteness, accessibility, rural, urban, place attachment, preservation of culture and identity, shifts in identity and culture, minority and majority populations, migration, outmigration for increased opportunities, and return migration, otherwise known among geographers as *churn*.[21] Upon identifying those themes, I recognized that some of the themes identified were similar; therefore, I chose to group them together as common themes using the following coding table.

Table 4

Thematic Outcomes of the Materials

Stage 4	
Criteria Question	**Response**
1. Based on all sources that were screened, what themes have emerged?	List all themes:
2. Can any of the themes be grouped together based on commonalities?	Yes: Group themes into major themes and subthemes. No: Let the theme be one in itself.

[21] Churn refers to the movement back and forth, to and from a community, and is defined further in Chapter 3.

3. What are the final themes and subthemes which have emerged from the data screened regarding Aboriginal people, their communities, and islanders and their geographies?	List all themes:

Once all of sources were labeled properly and the themes and subthemes of the research had been identified, I completed the final stage of my analysis, Discussion and Conclusions, which involved writing about each source as it related to each theme.

Stage 5 - Discussion and conclusions. In stage 5, I made notes about the quotes and excerpts that I had extracted, stating why I believed that they were relevant to my research and also how I thought each piece of data was relevant to the purpose of my research and my research questions. The data were coded based on three basic steps for qualitative coding:

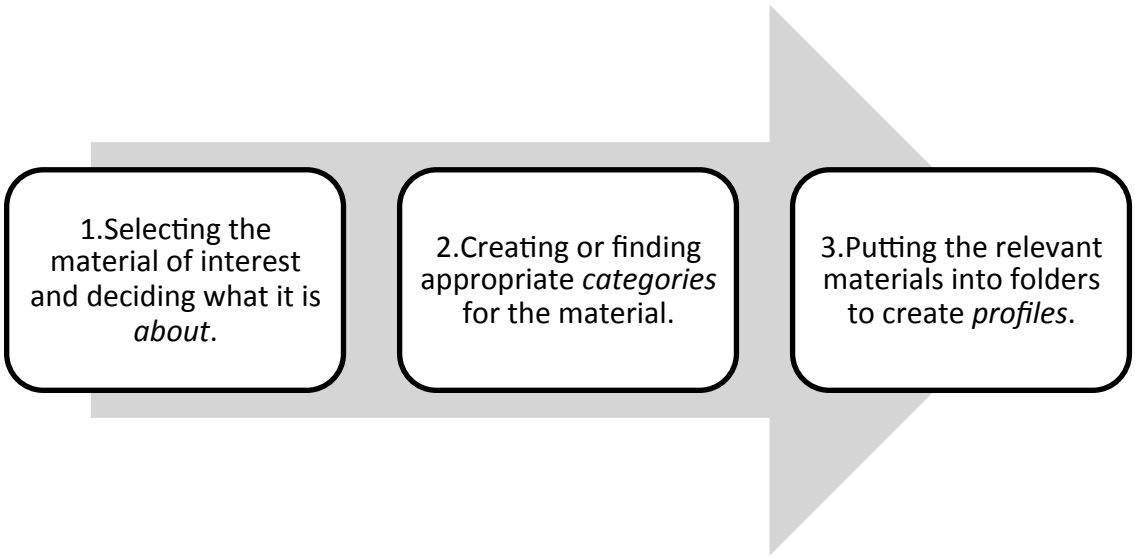

Figure 2.

The Three Stages of Coding Qualitative Research. Adapted from Littell, Corcoran, and Pillai (2008).

I began this process by writing about each piece of data. More specifically, it was necessary to write about each theme in order to create or find appropriate categories for each piece of data that had previously been extracted. Essentially, I created categories based on the themes that I had written about. These categories that the data fit into included: (a) bounded and finite spaces, (b) isolation and insularity, (c) the location of peripheral populations, (d) preservation of culture and identity, (e) place attachment, (f) ethnic homogeneity, (g) migration for increased opportunities, (h) minority in a majority populace: shifts and losses, which I divided into two sub-categories; shifts in identity/loss of culture, and loss of place attachment, and, (i) the churning momentum. The final themes were presented using spatial metaphors and included: (a) small, remote Aboriginal communities in Canada as small islands, (b) rural areas of Canada as the sea which binds together isolated areas with those of perceived increased opportunities, and finally, (c) urban areas of Canada, or those that are perceived to be more urban in nature, as mainlands where increased opportunities are said to be available.

After these categories were created based on the themes that emerged from the data, I created profiles based on the four research questions that I had been attempting to answer through my research in order to better organize my findings. The profiles that I created were: (a) *Geographic Settings and Features of Small Islands and Remote Aboriginal Communities*, (b) *The Impact of Isolation on Aboriginal Culture and Identity*, (c) *The Impact of Mobility and Migration on Aboriginal Culture and Identity*, and (d) *The Parallels of islanders and Aboriginal people*. These profiles represent the four sections of my chapter on thematic findings.

Conclusion of the Chapter

Employing the qualitative research methods of research synthesis and document analysis, although somewhat time-consuming, allowed me to review a great deal of data from various types of sources, as well as various academic disciplines. I would argue that, by employing the method of research synthesis and taking the approach of creating screening and extraction tables as suggested by Littell, Corcoran, and Pillai (2008), I was able to stay focused on the purpose of my thesis, organize my data, and respond to my research questions more effectively and efficiently. In chapter 4, titled Thematic Findings of the Research, I present the findings stemming from my analysis by means of the categories and profiles that were created during my qualitative analysis. Before presenting those findings, in the following chapter I offer definitions of terms used in this study and also provide a geographic background of the research.

CHAPTER 3 – DEFINITION OF TERMS AND GEOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

Introduction

There are a multitude of terms important to this study and, before discussing the thematic findings of the research, it is important to understand the multitude of terms used throughout this research and the definitions and contexts I applied to these terms. Predominantly, these terms pertain to the interdisciplinary field of Island Studies, Aboriginal people in Canada, and geographic terms, which I felt required specific definitions. Furthermore, due to the fact that this thesis is based in the discipline of geography, it is also important to understand the geographic background of the research. More specifically, providing this background provides a deeper understanding of the various groups of Aboriginal people, where they are located in Canada, how the populations of Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people differ, and also an understanding of what an island is and how islands have been incorporated into this study.

In this chapter, I begin by discussing terms related to Aboriginal people in Canada. I first discuss historical terms and definitions and then provide more contemporary terms that are deemed appropriate today. I also define various geographic terms important to this study before discussing the discipline of Aboriginal geography. Furthermore, I provide a geographic background of the research conducted, which includes the geographic distribution of Aboriginal people, as well as islands of the world.

Terms Related to the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada

Many terms related to Aboriginal people in Canada were initially introduced by Euro-Canadian colonizers. As time has passed and Aboriginal people have gained more respect in

Canada, terms have begun to change. Many terms from the colonial era, which were associated with Aboriginal people in Canada, are now considered to be outdated and disrespectful. Thus, they are no longer deemed appropriate to use. Such terms include *Indian*, and depending on content, *reserve*, both of which are defined and explained herein.

Historical Definitions of Terms

Aboriginal people were the original inhabitants of Canada, but their lives changed drastically upon the arrival of the European settlers in the 1800s (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008). The term Aboriginal is derived from the Latin word "ab origine," which means original founders or "from the beginning" (Gregory, 2009, p. 1). In the 19th century, the word *Aborigines* symbolized the original inhabitants of what Europeans referred to as the "New World" (Gregory, 2009). Today, the term Aboriginal is often used when speaking about a large group of individuals who are considered to be of First Nation, Inuit, or Métis descent. Along with these terms, *status* or *status Indian* are used to provide a special distinction between certain rights given by the Crown. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (2012) stated that any individuals recognized by the federal government as being registered under what is known as the *Indian Act 1876*, which was meant to empower the federal government to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into Euro-Canadian culture, are classified as being *Registered Indians* or *Status Indians*. The *Indian Act of 1876* has since been amended many times and its purpose is now to define "certain federal government obligations." It also "regulates the management of Indian reserve lands, Indian moneys and other resources" (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 2012).

Ultimately, the arrival of the Europeans to what is now known as Canada drastically changed the lives of Aboriginal people, separating them from the rest of Canada and causing them to become part of a minority population on the land that they originally occupied for centuries. Today, several hundred years after colonization some Aboriginal people are still located on what have previously been referred to as *reserves*. A reserve, defined as a piece of land that is held by the Crown and set aside for First Nations people who are recognized under the *Indian Act*, to live on, is typically located in what people consider to be isolated, remote, rural locations of Canada (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 2012). The *Indian Act of 1876* defines these areas as "any tract or tracts of land set apart by treaty or otherwise for the use or benefit of or granted to a particular band of Indians of which legal title is in the Crown, but which is unsurrendered" (p. 175). At the present time, less than half of the Aboriginal population in Canada live on-reserve (Statistics Canada, 2008), but the term reserve, as mentioned previously is not often used by non-Aboriginal people when speaking to those parcels of land. Instead, the term *First Nations community* has replaced it.

For many years, the term that described people who lived on a reserve was *Indian*. This term was used until the 1970s when Canadian leaders began to use the term *First Nation* (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2012). The reason for this change was because the term Indian was perceived as offensive by some Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. There are, however, several legal reasons as to why the term *Indian* is still used. For example, the word Indian is still used in the *Indian Act* and by the Government of Canada when referencing a particular group of Aboriginal people (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2012). Up until 2011, *Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada* was called *Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.* However, fortunately Canadians are

starting to recognize and own the injustices that were/are bestowed upon many Aboriginal people. Aligned with the slow development, language is changing, as well.

Before discussing contemporary terms and definitions pertaining to Aboriginal people, it is necessary to clarify two more expression: Indigenous and Native. The term Indigenous is not often used when speaking about Aboriginal people in Canada. At a workshop that I attended in 2012, the context behind the reasoning for this term no longer being used was partially due to the fact that everyone is indigenous of some place (personal communication, Cultural Competency Workshop, March 25, 2012), and the same can be said for the term Native. Those terms are no longer specific enough to identify who we refer to as Aboriginal people today, and, therefore, those terms are not be used within my thesis. Instead, I use the term Aboriginal to refer to the original inhabitants of Canada and differentiate between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis where necessary.

Contemporary Definitions of Terms

As years have passed, terms have changed to reflect the growing and ever-changing relationships between Aboriginal people and the rest of Canada. For example, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, the term reserve is no longer often used by non-Aboriginal people. The terms on-reserve and off-reserve, however, are deemed to be politically correct, because they describe people, services, and objects, which are located or related to what are now known as First Nations people and their communities (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 2012).

The term Aboriginal is the approved and preferred word used to describe the general population of those with Aboriginal ancestry and has replaced the term *Indian*. Despite the

amount of history that goes along with defining an Aboriginal person, it is important to note that there is no single, correct definition of Aboriginal populations in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2007). Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (2012) currently define Aboriginal people, however, as "the descendants of the original inhabitants of North America."

Similarly, the term First Nation(s), according to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (2012), like Aboriginal, is a fairly widely used term, and no official definition of it exists. One specific indicator as to whether an Aboriginal person can identify as being First Nation, however, is based on whether or not they have *status*. The term, First Nations, originated "as a result of historical and political events" (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008, p. 22). This point is because the National Indian Brotherhood wanted to create a term to differentiate Aboriginal people in Canada from other groups of Aboriginal people around the world (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008). In creating this term in 1981, Aboriginal people in Canada found that the new title was a powerful symbol, which was not only used as an identifier, but also had political prestige when dealing with legal issues as well as with issues of identity (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008). In some cases, First Nations communities have also adopted the term *First Nation* to replace the word *band* in the name of their community (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2012). The term First Nations community still refers to specific lands, which were originally set aside for Aboriginal peoples and continues to have the same function that reserve once did.

As mentioned, there are two other groups of Aboriginal peoples who inhabit Canada: the Inuit and the Métis. In the Inuktitut language, the word *Inuit* translates to *the people* (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008). The Inuit are Aboriginal peoples who live in Northern regions of Canada, such as the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Northern Quebec, and Northern Labrador

(Frideres & Gadacz, 2008; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2012). Their history of contact with Europeans began around 1500 in the East and in the late 1800s in the more Western parts of the country (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008). The Inuit people are often notably mentioned when scholars speak about issues of climate change and the seal hunt because of their knowledge regarding the changing climate in the north and also due to their subsistence practices.

The Métis people are Aboriginal people in Canada who have "both First Nations and European ancestry" (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008, pp. 22, 27-28). This group of Aboriginal people are distinctly different than First Nations and Inuit people, as well as non-Aboriginal people, because they have "a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree" (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 2012). That being said, the Métis have not been recognized in the same way that the First Nations and Inuit people are recognized within Canada, and a definition for these peoples has yet to be fully developed. In order to identify as Métis, the Supreme Court of Canada (2003) has stated that three conditions must been met. These include: self-identifying as a Métis individual, having an ancestral connection to an official Métis community, and being accepted by a Métis community.

Definitions of Geographic Terms

Within the context of human geography, there are certain terms that can be defined in many different ways. Some geographic terms can be defined not only practically, but also, functionally, and behaviourally. As individuals, we all have the potential to define the geographic terms located within this section differently based on each of our experiences within particular geographic settings. Many of the geographic terms in this section can also be defined in a specific Aboriginal context. Therefore, many of the terms defined in this section are

expanded upon further, within an Aboriginal context, so as to inform the reader regarding how they relate to the research. The terms defined in this section of my thesis include: rural, urban, urbanization, isolation, insularity, remoteness, accessibility, mobility, migration, and outmigration, as well as culture and identity. Upon reading this section, I attempt to familiarize the reader with the geographic terms associated with this study, and provide a sense of how they are related to the academic discipline of geography.

Rural, Urban, and Urbanization

It has been said that "The distinction between 'urban' and 'rural' between the city and the country, is one of the oldest and most pervasive of geographical binaries" (Woods, 2011, p. 3). These terms are used quite often, not only by scholars, but also by the general public. When asked where I come from, it is not out of the ordinary for me to say the "small, rural town of Sussex, New Brunswick." I also often say that it is an agricultural community, but it has changed, seemingly becoming more urbanized each time that I return home to visit.[22] There are key words in the illustration that I have provided, which fall into the category of rural, such as small and agricultural. The reason that I believe the town is becoming increasingly more urbanized is due to the increase in population and the addition of infrastructure and bigger, brand-named stores replacing the *Mom and Pop* shops with which I grew up. In the sections below, I speak to the terms rural and urban, while also explaining additional processes related to the terms, such as urbanization.

[22] This illustration of my home town represents another example of a special place, which I consider to be important. A place that, I would argue, will remain important all my life, because it shaped who I am today.

Rural Canada. The term rural is a broad term, open to interpretation, which is not often defined by scholars, perhaps because the term is often contested (Desjardin, Halseth, Leblanc, & Ryser, 2002). The definition of what is classified as *rural* depends on the issues being addressed within the geographic setting, but there is no one definition of rural that can satisfy all questions (Cross & Frankcombe, 1994). In other words, the question of what or who is/are constituted as being rural, is dependent upon why you are asking (duPlessi, Beshiri, Bollman, & Clemenson, 2001; Reimer, 2010; 2005). As a geographer, having taken courses in cultural, economic, human, physical, and social geography, I am aware of the multitude of ways that the term can be defined. Also, I have learned that the term rural, by and large, holds many definitions which are dependent upon the individual defining the term. Michael Woods (2005), in his book, "Rural Geography," stated that:

> 'Rural' is one of those curious words which everyone thinks they know what it means, but which is actually very difficult to define precisely. Attempts by academics to define and delimit rural areas and rural societies have always run into problems, sometimes because the distinctions they have drawn have been rather arbitrary, sometimes because they have over-emphasized the differences between city and country, and sometimes because they have under-emphasized the diversity of the countryside (p. 15)

This statement by Woods remains accurate; we often believe that we know what rural and urban mean, but, when we are asked to define the terms, it becomes more difficult to come to a consensus of what is rural and what is urban.

As mentioned previously, two people may define the terms much differently based on understandings of the terms, as well as experiences within the two geographic settings (Reimer,

2010). A longstanding debate regarding the term rural involved a discussion of whether rural was "a geographical concept, a location with boundaries on a map, or whether it is a social representation, a community of interest, a culture and way of life" (du Plessis et al., 2001, p. 4). I would argue that each of those characteristics represent the rural. One often hears the words rural and country linked together, not only by the general public, but also by scholars (Desjardin, Halseth, Leblanc, & Ryser, 2002; MacGregor-Fors, 2011; Woods, 2005; 2009; 2011). Many people refer to this area as the country or country-side and think of natural resources, as well as agriculture and a particular way of life, when defining it (Reimer, 2010; Woods, 2005). Marzluff, Bowmen, and Donnely (2001) stated that rural areas are "sparsely settled" (p. 12), while MacGregor-Fors argued that rural areas are also "distinguishable by the matrix surrounding them" due to the agricultural landscape which often acts as a backdrop (2011, p. 248). When driving from an urban area, there may be a distinct boundary where one may notice that the area becomes less populated, and where there are changes in infrastructure, as well as an increase in the presence of natural resources.

Based on population size, according to Statistics Canada (2006), a census rural area is an area outside of places with 1,000 people or more or an area located outside a place where the density is 400 or more people per square kilometre. Along with that, Statistics Canada also defines rural under the term *rural and small town* (RST). In that case, a rural area includes individuals who live in towns or municipalities outside of the commuting zone of larger urban centres that have a population of 10,000 or more. The population density in such a location is less than 150 people per square kilometre (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2010), which includes areas that are considered to be "remote" or that are classified as "wilderness areas" (duPlessi et al., 2001, p. 4).

Along with those definitions provided by Statistics Canada and the OECD, the OECD also defined what are referred to as *predominantly rural regions*. Those rural regions include individuals who live in census divisions with "more than 50 percent of the population living in OECD rural communities" (duPlessi et al., 2001). This definition also includes all census divisions that do not have major cities. duPlessi et al. also incorporated two other definitions into their *Rural and Small Town Bulletin*. These included non-metropolitan regions, which include individuals who live "outside metropolitan regions with urban centres of 50,000 or more population" and also, rural postal codes, where individuals with a "0" as the second character in their postal codes are classified as being located in a rural area (p. 7).

Each of these definitions emphasizes different rural criteria including population numbers, population density, labor market, or settlement area. Other definitions state that rural settings include all land located outside urban areas as well as the population that lives in towns and municipalities that are located outside the commuting zone of larger urban centres (Statistics Canada, 2006). More often than not, if someone lives in a rural area, there is limited or no access to public transportation. Therefore, it is common practice to own a vehicle, and, in many cases, it is also necessary to commute a longer distance from home to work or school because jobs and educational institutions are sparse in rural regions, but often plentiful in urban areas.

Based on the multitude of definitions provided in this subsection regarding the term rural, for the purpose of this research, I have chosen to define rural areas of Canada as those areas that are "not urban," with an emphasis on the fact that the rural is a less densely, as well as less diversely populated area, with limited opportunities, little to no access to public transportation, a lack of jobs, and also, a lack in various other amenities, such as access to education and health care. The size of the population of a rural area is, in the context of this study, not necessarily a

criterion of interest. The importance, instead, is on the limited diversity within the population of a rural setting and the representation of a majority populace within rural communities.

Urban Canada. Having defined the term rural, one might assume that *urban* would be a simple term to define and comprehend. The term "urban," as Statistics Canada (2006) stated, is widely used and is a term that "people intuitively understand - a concentration of population at a high density." Often referred to as *the city*, urban areas are associated with many modes of transportation, as well as services (Hodge & Gordon, 2008), and typically, the majority of the land is covered by buildings (MacGregor-Fors, 2011; Marzluff, Bowmen, & Donnely, 2001). It is the opposite of what is considered to be a rural area. That being said, the term urban, similar to that of rural, is not often defined by scholars; there is a lack of consistency between the term and definition found in articles relating to urban settings and the process of urbanization (MacGregor-Fors, 2011). Due to this fact, it has been suggested that journals, such as the journal of "Landscape and Urban Planning," should require prospective authors to follow specific guidelines with reference to including information describing not only study sites, but also, defining the urban related terms used in the text (MacGregor-Fors, 2011). An urban setting, or an area that is urban-like in nature, can functionally and behaviourally be defined in a similar manner as rural areas. This point is illustrated in the paragraphs below, which explain uses of the term urban and also how it is defined within the context of this research.

Nilon, Berkowitz, and Hollweg (2003) stated that "definitions of urban vary among countries and often are specific to the political, social, and economic context in which they are utilized" (p. 1). Although there is no universally accepted measure of urban, Statistics Canada (2006c) has been using a definition that is based on both population density and concentration criteria. The main advantage of consistently using this definition when referring to urban settings

is the ability to support historical continuity analysis of changing population settlements (Puderer, 2009). In Canada, an urban area is defined as an area with "a minimum population concentration of 1,000 persons and a population density of at least 400 persons per square kilometre" (Statistics Canada, 2006c) with a population that is "dispersed at a low density" (Puderer, 2009).

Unlike the definition of rural, which has stayed the same for many years, recently, the term urban is now referred to as a *population centre* by Statistics Canada (2011). The definition of a population centre, however, remains the same as the definition provided when this area was simply referred to as being urban. Although in this thesis the term urban is being used, it is important to note that there are three groups of population centres, which are divided based on the size of their population. These include:

- Small population centres, with a population of between 1,000 and 29,999;
- Medium population centres, with a population of between 30,000 and 99,999;
- Large urban population centres, consisting of a population of 100,000 and over. (Statistics Canada, 2011).

This study involves urban areas representing population centres of each size, and I have chosen to define such settings as those which are more densely, as well as diversely, populated, with increased infrastructure, modes of transportation, and most importantly, increased economic, educational, and social opportunities which appeal to residents of other geographic settings.

When individuals move to an urban area, or spend a great deal of time in an urban area or an area that is more urban-like than rural, they may undergo a process of becoming urbanized

due to their experiences in that setting and their attachment to that place. This process, known as urbanization, causes cultural and social changes among individuals (Hiller, 2010). It has been suggested that "urbanization is an extremely important concept because virtually all European writers imagine that 'civilization' arises only in cities" (Forbes, 2001, p. 5); however, the process of urbanization, or moving to an area that is more densely and diversely populated, which includes shifts in identity, can have devastating impacts for some individuals and cultures. Before this idea can be discussed further, however, it is necessary to define the other terms that are related to the geographic settings and features involved in this thesis.

Isolation, Remoteness, Periphery, and Accessibility

The term isolation is not only geographic, but it is also social. Individuals may feel isolated for many reasons whether that stems from their geographic location or from a sense of exclusion. Royle (2006), an island scholar, wrote that the geographic definition of isolation "is obvious - an island sits alone, any person wishing to visit must make a dedicated and unusual journey over water" (p. 11), and, although this point is true of island isolation, geographic isolation does not necessarily mean having to *journey over water*. In many cases, the term isolation, in a nissological context, is replaced with insularity. Knapp (2008) defined insularity as "The quality of being isolated as a result of living on islands, or of being somewhat detached in outlook and experience," further stating that is can result from personal, historical, and social contingency (p. 18).

The term isolation is ambiguous, and, like many other terms addressed in this section, it is not often clearly defined by scholars, even those in the discipline of nissology. Nissologists are consistently arguing as to whether islands themselves are isolated, yet do not often provide

clear definitions as to what isolation means or to what degree isolation has occurred within their studies. There are other terms similar to isolation, such as remoteness, accessibility, and peripherality that also are not well defined by scholars. However, in this section, I define them within the context of this thesis.

Through email communication with Statistics Canada (2012a), it was noted that no definitions for isolation, remoteness, or accessibility exist in their database (personal communication, December 10, 2012). Although documents from Statistics Canada often mention the terms isolation and remote in reference to geographic locations, they do not differentiate between the similar terms. Instead, when policies are created, Statistics Canada stated that they refer to the definition of rural to explain them.[23] The table below represents physical and human characteristics of Northern Canada, which are characteristics that are very similar to those found in areas that I would consider to be isolated, remote, or not easily accessible.

Table 5

Common Characteristics of the North (Bone, 2009, p. 9, Table 1.2)

Physical Characteristics	Human Characteristics
Cold environment	Sparse population
Limited biophysical diversity	Population stabilization
Wilderness	High cost of living
Remoteness	Few Highways
Permafrost	Aboriginal Population
Vast geographic area	Settling of land claims
Fragile environment	Financial dependency
Slow biological growth	Resource economy
Importance of wildlife	Reliance on imported foods
Global warming	Country food
Continental climate	Economic hinterland

[23] The definition used by Statistics Canada (2012) when referring to isolation, remoteness, or accessibility states that "Rural areas include all territory lying outside urban areas. Taken together, urban and rural areas cover all of Canada." If this is the case, then anything not considered to be urban, in the eyes of Statistics Canada, is also geographically isolated, remote, and is accessible only on a limited basis.

Although this table represents characteristics that are commonly found in Northern Canada, they are also characteristics that are similar to many rural areas in Canada that are considered to be isolated. Although isolated regions of the country may not necessarily have to deal with the cold environments, and others may not have permafrost, many have a continental climate and some are reliant on imported foods. The human characteristics listed in this table are exceptional examples of what one might expect to find in a rural, isolated area of Canada, such as having Aboriginal populations, sparse populations, and issues of population stability.

Interestingly, sources that do explain, describe, and define the term isolation, are often those pertaining to First Nations and Inuit peoples. Communities where air transportation is the sole mode of transportation, which are often places where Aboriginal communities are located within Canada, are considered to be more isolated than other areas (Bone, 2009). Nunavut, for example, is a Canadian territory located in the North, which is considered to be very isolated by the people living in the southern regions of Canada. This sense of isolation is based on the fact that the territory is not linked to the rest of Canada by "surface transportation" (e.g., roads, ships, and/or trains) (Bone, 2009). Air service, on the other hand, is available to all 26 communities located in the territory.

Based on the degree of isolation that a remote community faces, there can be issues surrounding the necessity of moving food and supplies into the area (Bone, 2009). Issues such as these are determined by how accessible a location is through various modes of transportation. The term access, in reference to transportation geography is "an absolute term implying that a location has access or does not" (Rodrigue, Comtois, & Slack, 2006, p. 318), but the concept of accessibility is dependent upon available modes of transportation (Bone, 2009). Accessibility is referred to as "the measure of the capacity of a location to be reached by, or to reach different

locations" (Rodrigues, Comtois, & Slack, 2006). However, as mentioned previously, isolation is not only a geographic term, stemming from location, it is also a psychological construct that can affect an individual, or entire populations and cultures, especially those located in areas where modes of transportation and increased technological advances are limited (Bone, 2009; Rodrigues, Comtois, & Slack, 2006).

In the context of this research, the term isolation refers to communities located in areas of Canada that are not easily accessible. They are, like rural settings, home to majority populations, are more traditional, and the inhabitants tend to live with the land. In this study, the isolation that some people and cultures face is not a negative characteristic of Aboriginality or islandness. Instead, as the research shows, isolation, limited accessibility, and peripherality within the context of Aboriginal people and islanders, provide advantages. At the same time, I recognize that they can pose problems for many individuals and families.

Before moving forward to the next set of terms that have been defined, I have incorporated the following Census Subdivision Classification map of Canada to illustrate where rural, urban, and isolated regions of the country are considered to be located.

Figure 3. Census Subdivision Classification Map.

Source: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Census Subdivision Classification (Urban, Rural, Isolated), 2012.

This map represents areas in Canada that are considered to be isolated, rural, and urban, based on the Census Subdivision Classification (2012) for the country. Although areas represented on the map can be interpreted differently by various individuals, it should be noted that all three of the northern territories are classified as isolated on the map. There are very few areas that are considered to be truly urban, and the rural areas, in most cases, seem to connect the isolated regions of the country to those that are more urban in nature. I compare this map to various others located in Chapter 4 so as to compare these geographic settings with the locations of Aboriginal communities in Canada. Before doing so, however, I define terms associated with movement within the country in the following sections.

Mobility, Migration, and Outmigration

The term mobility "concerns the movement of persons from one place to another" (Statistics Canada, 2010). It refers to the physical movement of people, ideas, or goods (Baerenholdt & Brynhild, 2008; Gregory, 2009). It also refers to the various speeds, capacities, and efficiencies of movements (Rodrigues, Comtois, & Slack, 2006). Although the topic of mobility is historically significant and, therefore, not unique to contemporary times, Sheller (2011) argued that the world is "arguably moving differently and in more dynamic, complex and trackable ways than ever before, while facing new challenges of forced mobility and uneven mobility, environmental limits and climate change and the movement of unpredictable risks" (p. 1). Mobility, in the context of this thesis, refers to the movement of people to and from various geographic settings through the process of migration.

The term migration, a type of mobility (Baerenholdt & Brynhild, 2008), refers to a change in residential location, whether within a city, across continents, or through daily mobility. Migrating also includes commuting and refers to movements that do not involve a change of residence (Gregory, 2009). Humans could not exist without some form of mobility, whether that includes walking, driving, sailing, or flying, for example, because mobility is important for accessibility and is often considered to be a important part of independence and quality of life (Diamond, 2005; Gregory, 2009; Pratt & Hanson, 1994). In particular, geographers became interested in the concept of migration, because it was clearly related to the development of places, as well as the relationships between and within them (Skeldon, 2008).

The concept of migration can be classified according to four broad criteria: intra-national versus international; temporary versus permanent; forced versus voluntary; and legal versus

illegal (Bailey, 2001; Castles & Miller, 2003; Gregory, 2009). Within the discipline of geography, as well as other social science disciplines, scholars often specialize according to these distinctions. Herein, I classify, migration, or, more specifically, outmigration, as temporary versus permanent and also forced versus voluntary. Therefore, it is defined as the movement of people, both temporarily and permanently, to places perceived to have greater opportunities.

Aboriginal Geography and Corresponding Terms

According to data compiled by Statistics Canada (2006) there were 1,172,790 Aboriginal people located in Canada, which included 698,025 First Nations people, 389,785 Métis and 50,485 Inuit. Of those individuals, 623,470 lived in urban areas, 240,845 were located in rural areas, and 308,490 Aboriginal people were classified as having First Nations status and were located on-reserve (Statistics Canada, 2006a).

Aboriginal geography focuses on geographic issues facing Aboriginal people such as isolation and remoteness, mobility and migration, and rurality and urbanization. Although no clear definition of the term exists, I would argue that Aboriginal geography can be defined as the study of physical and human geographic issues as they pertain to Aboriginal peoples and communities, including how they impact the lives of those peoples and communities, not only geographically, but also how those geographic issues affect Aboriginal peoples emotionally, physically, and socially.

The sub-discipline of Aboriginal geography still requires a great deal of research because, although the discipline has been growing, Peters (2000) has suggested that Aboriginal people are still noted as being largely underrepresented by geographers, especially those Aboriginal people

who have migrated to or have been raised in urban areas (Lobo & Peters, 2001; Peters, 2009). Richards (2008) stated that part of the reason for this lack of academic research relating to Aboriginal people is because Aboriginal people do not often value Western education in the same way that non-Aboriginal people do, and therefore, if they are to be represented, it is non-Aboriginal people who choose to do so. As Peters (2000) stated:

> Canadian geographers are almost entirely non-Aboriginal, which means that the production and dissemination of academic geography is under the control of non-Aboriginal people . . . the ability of geographic research to give voice to Native people will be an important measure of its quality (p. 52).

Due to this point, Aboriginal people have been underrepresented in a geographic sense, especially those who are located in urban areas (Peters, 2000). That being said, there are specific aspects of geography, which affect the lives of Aboriginal people in Canada. Many of those geographic factors have been previously defined in this chapter, and, in this section, those terms are explained and discussed further in the context of Aboriginal geography.

Aboriginal Issues Stemming from Rurality

The geographic dispersion of First Nations communities in Canada has been a direct result of Euro-Canadian relationships. Woods (2005) stated:

> In the process of colonization the first nations were essentially rural societies; however, in the process of colonization indigenous people were dispossessed of their lands and forced into reservations that were again predominantly located in rural situations (p. 285).

The rural locations where close to 50 % of Aboriginal peoples live represent "geographies of oppression and subordination" (Woods, 2005, pp. 285–286). The lack of services, educational institutions, employment opportunities, and modes of transportation affect the lives of Aboriginal people and often cause them to have to leave their communities to access those services in bigger, more urbanized areas. In the case of Aboriginal people, commuting or leaving their rural, remote locations can cause issues that drastically affect their identity, as is discussed in Chapter 4.

Aboriginal Urbanization

In 1901, 5.1% of Aboriginal peoples were located in urban areas. By 1950, this number had increased slightly, to 6.7%. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, there was a dramatic increase in the number of urban Aboriginal peoples. By the 1980s, 35% of Aboriginal peoples were located in urban areas (Peters, 2005b). Today, according to Statistics Canada (2013), over 50% of Aboriginal people are living in urban areas. Donovan (as cited in Howard and Proulx, 2011), stated that "Aboriginal urbanization has increased significantly over the past 60 years" (pp.125–126). The movement of Aboriginal peoples to cities and the increased time spent in cities have both caused Aboriginal people to become increasingly more urbanized. That being said, Lobo (2001) stated "There is very little focused attention, research, or writing that relates to urban Native topics" (p. xi). Nathan Cardinal (2006), who researched Aboriginal issues in Canada, has made similar, more contemporary observations. Although there is more written about urban Aboriginal people today, especially related to educational issues and opportunities, geographic issues still require greater attention.

Issues Surrounding Mobility and Migration as They Relate to Aboriginal Peoples

In terms of Aboriginal geography and Aboriginal migration, "Aboriginal rural to urban migration, the flow back and forth between cities and reserves, and the development of urban Aboriginal communities represent some of the most significant shifts in the histories and cultures of Aboriginal people in Canada" (Howard & Proulx, 2011, p. 1). That being said, as many geographers have noted, Aboriginal migration "has been largely neglected in Aboriginal studies across disciplines," and, if the topic has been noted, the literature pertaining to the subject is "outdated or policy-oriented rather than scholarly in approach" (Howard & Proulx, 2011, p. 1), which has left some Aboriginal people neglected based on geographic locations.

Isolation as it Effects Aboriginal Peoples

Social isolation must also be spoken of in reference to Aboriginal people in Canada. Social isolation is a complex concept, which includes several scopes including physical, social, emotional, and psychological. This type of isolation can affect people at individual, community, and societal levels (Keefe, Andrew, Fancey, & Hall, 2006). In a geographic sense, islanders and Aboriginal people who live in urban areas or on the mainland, are not considered to be geographically isolated. However, based on the concept of social isolation, individuals may feel extremely isolated in these geographic settings for a variety of other reasons. This concept is presented in Chapter 4 and is discussed in relation to culture and identity of islanders and Aboriginal people in Chapter 5.

The Island Connection

When people hear the word isolation, they often think *island*. Although islands are much more than "mere appendages to continents" (Nunn, 2003, p. 312), it is very difficult to define

what an island truly is (Royle, 2001). Defining what is considered to be a small island is even more difficult. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (1982) defined islands as "naturally formed areas of land, surrounded by water, which are above water at high tide" (Article 121), but this definition does not differentiate between small and large islands. The Ministerial Decree No. 41 (2000) of the Department of Marine and Fisheries defined the term small island as an island equal to or less than 10,000 km^2 in area, with a population of less than 200,000. However, this number can be modified depending on who is defining the term or studying the landmass. At the Commonwealth Science Council Meeting (1984), it was decided that the area of a small island was 5,000 km^2. More recently, Baldacchino & Bertram (2009) noted that the definition of a small island state, according to the Commonwealth Secretariat (2006), is an island of less than 1.5 million people and more recently extended the definition to include up to 5 million people. This definition depends on the geography of the government or organization defining the term and the specific islands being identified.

In the context of this thesis, islands, as Baldacchino (2005) titled one of his articles, are "objects of representation" (p. 247). I discuss small islands in a general sense, without the addition of many specific examples or case studies. The reason for this, as was introduced in the first chapter, is because my thesis is based on Aboriginal communities and various geographic processes, as being similar to islands and the geographic processes that many islanders undergo. In turn, islands represent a unique spatial metaphor.

Culture and Identity

Culture and identity are two communal factors, which are affected by geographic locations. Harris (1999) defined culture as

> Embrac[ing] not only values and ideas, but the entire set of institutions that humans live by. Some anthropologists see culture as consisting exclusively of learned ways of thinking and behaving, while others emphasize genetic influences on the repertory of cultural traits (p. 19)

He stated that, while some individuals view culture as consisting only of thoughts or ideas, others maintain that culture is comprised of thoughts and ideas, as well as other connected activities. Lastly, when defining the term, he stated that "a culture is the socially leaned ways of living found in human societies and that it embraces all aspects of social life, including both thought and behaviour" (p. 19). As Chowa & Healey stated, "For most people, home plays a central role in everyday life and possesses rich social, cultural and historical significance and holds numerous psychological meanings, which are of profound importance for people in shaping their identities" (as cited in Moore, 2000, p. 362). Identities, however, can shift and change based on experiences within various geographic settings.

As people grow older and experience new things, their identities shift and change, but ultimately, those identities determine who people are as individuals and groups. Culture in particular is an example of what makes us who we are as social beings. As Kroeber and Kluckholm (1952) stated, identity "consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted . . . consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values" (p. 181). The concepts of culture and

identity, as they emerge from geographic locations are of great interest to human geographers, and they both stem from what I have referred to previously as *place*. Cardinal (2006) specified:

> The ability to access traditional foods, participate in traditional activities, and speak traditional languages are vital to maintaining a vibrant and healthy culture. The conservation of culture, cultural education, and the protection of objects of cultural value are also important to the maintenance of culture (p. 226).

Corbett (2005) has a different idea when it comes to culture. He indicated, "According to many contemporary theorists, a culture is no longer connected to any particular place" (p. 245). Although that idea may be true, it is important to note that, for many Aboriginal people in Canada, as well as people in general, place attachment remains very important and influences one's culture and identity, as is discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.

Geographic Background of the Research

When I think of a small island or an Aboriginal community, as a human geographer, there are several terms that automatically come to mind. These include isolation, rural, traditional, culture, and identity. These terms can be applied to both geographic locations involved in this research. The terms isolation and rural come from my background in geography, and knowledge of the typical locations of islands and Aboriginal communities; the terms, traditional, culture, and identity come to my mind because of my own personal experiences attending various powwows throughout Canada, travelling to, and researching various islands, and attending lectures regarding island studies, as well as sharing circles provided by numerous Aboriginal organizations. Similarly, Frideres and Gadacz (2008) referred to these terms in their own scholarly research, even stating that reserves are, in fact, "rural-based communities" (p. 57).

The Tourism Research Centre (2010) located on Prince Edward Island, for example, discusses rural tourism on Prince Edward Island. Along with this, Frideres and Gadacz said that First Nations communities "provide security and roots for many Aboriginal people" (p. 57), which relates back to my original classifications of Aboriginal communities as places with unique cultures, traditions, and identities. By the same token, these same characteristics that emerge from place are often also the reasons why individuals choose to travel to islands – to experience different cultures and traditions of the people who originated in those locations.

Conclusion to the Chapter

In this chapter, I have defined important terms related to the research and its findings. Along with this information, I also provided a geographic background of the research by discussing the geographic locations of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, as well as introducing geographic components of islands. In the following chapter, I present the thematic findings of my research based on my four research questions. In doing so, I provide geographic characteristics of Aboriginal communities and islands, which, as can be seen in section four, are similar in some cases.

CHAPTER 4: THEMATIC FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, I use the results of my research synthesis and document analysis to depict the thematic findings as they pertain to the four research questions. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the four research questions are:

(1) *How do certain geographic settings and features, particularly as they pertain to small islands, relate to Aboriginal people who live in remote Aboriginal communities?*

(2) *How does the isolation that some Aboriginal people experience living in remote Aboriginal communities influence the culture and identity of those people living in those locations?*

(3) *How do mobility and the migration of Aboriginal people away from isolated Aboriginal communities and into non-Aboriginal communities that are more urban in nature influence their sense of culture and identity?*

(4) *What parallels can be drawn between island living and living in an isolated Aboriginal community?*

Research Question 1: Geographic Settings and Features That Small Islands and Small Aboriginal Communities Share

How do certain geographic settings and features, particularly as they pertain to small islands, relate to Aboriginal people who live in remote Aboriginal communities? In reviewing sources in an attempt to respond to the first research question, three common themes emerged from the data. These included (a) *spaces that are considered to be bound or finite*, (b) *the impact and importance of isolation*, and lastly, (c) *populations located on the periphery*.

Bounded and Finite Spaces

Geographically speaking, small islands and small, remote Aboriginal communities represent locations that are seemingly bound and finite. Many islands, for example, are surrounded by water,[24] which creates a type of bound, finite illusion. Although islands do not have a consistent boundary, due to tides moving inwards and outwards, they are considered to be finite spaces. Similarly, Aboriginal communities in Canada, although scattered throughout the country, are also located in seemingly bound and finite areas, based on their geographic locations, which stem from Treaty agreements.

Geography played a major role in the Europeans' decision to place Native peoples on lands and in areas that best suited European goals and objectives. This "settlement of First Nations peoples on reserves separated [Aboriginal people] materially and conceptually, from urban areas" (Peters, 2000, p. 48), and ultimately, First Nations communities became the only geographic settings in which their traditional knowledge and ways of life could be practiced and celebrated (Peters, 2000).

As scholars in the field of Aboriginal studies, Frideres and Gadacz (2008) stated "Aboriginal people in Canada reside in scattered communities and are divided by geographical boundaries, cultural difference, and legal distinctions" (p. 129). They "consider treaties to be statements of recognition of their sovereign or independent status, made necessary by the Royal Proclamation of 1763" (Steckley, 2012, p. 125). However, in general, treaties involved Aboriginal people agreeing to forfeit their rights to certain areas of land in return for smaller parcels of land that were reserved for their use. As host Wab Kinew (2012) stated in the first

[24] Not all islands are surrounded by water. The term island, as mentioned earlier, can be used to define many things.

episode of the series *8th Fire*, "[they] were forced from their land and given tiny little spaces called reserves, which were controlled by government agents." Boundaries were created in this manner, and Aboriginal people "were supposed to live out of the way of the settlers who took [their] land" (Kinew, 8th Fire). This idea represents "one of the spatial manifestations of the labeling of Aboriginal peoples" (Peters, 2005b, p. 342).

The Namgis nation, which is an island inhabited mainly by Aboriginal people currently resides on Cormorant Island, which is best known for its main and only village, Alert Bay (P. Vannini, personal communication, May 27, 2013). The Aboriginal people who inhabit this island are actively attempting to regain possession of their traditional territory in the Nimpkish Valley of Vancouver Island, as their traditional territory is much larger than the little island where they have been historically confined by treaties (P. Vannini, personal communication, May 27, 2013). As this example illustrates, more often than not, Aboriginal communities represent areas of the country that are now classified as being *isolated*, and, in the case of the Namgis nation, they represent a bound, isolated island community, as well as an isolated Aboriginal community.

Isolation and Insularity

Isolation and insularity can benefit a community or individual, but they can also pose challenges. The terms isolation, insularity, and smallness are often heard when speaking to nissologists in the field of island studies. Each of these terms implies a negative connotation, but negativity does not necessarily need to be the immediate reaction when one hears such terms. In this subsection, the themes of isolation, insularity, and smallness have been combined due to their commonalities within the research. These three themes are based on finite geographical landscapes and represent the spaces that many islands and Aboriginal communities occupy

within the Earth's geography. Therefore, due to their similar characteristics, I have chosen to group them into one large theme.

Hearing that something is bound, finite, insular, isolated, or small, brings a certain visual to mind. One may even choose to draw such a space similar to the way that 'Lu' drew an island in Baldacchino's article "Islands, Objects of Representation" (2005, p. 248), which can be viewed below.

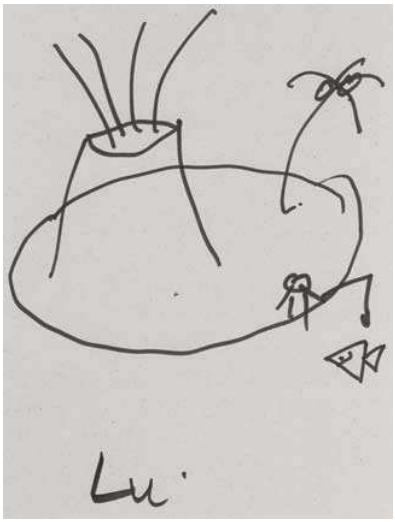

Figure 4. Lu's Interpretation of 'Island.'

Source: Baldacchino (2005, p. 248)

It is important to realize that a space which is finite, small, and isolated, such as an island, can be represented by much more than a circle on a piece of paper, as the cognitive map below, which I created for a course titled "Themes and Perspectives in Island Studies" (2011) shows.

Figure 5. Tennant's Interpretation of 'Island.'

Source: Tennant (2011) Themes and Perspectives in Island Studies course.[25]

These illustrations, although meant to represent the same geographic entities, are drawn very differently based on the experiences and the perspectives offered by those who provided them. That being said, both illustrators chose to draw their *island* in the middle of a page, likely to show the isolation of the island, as well as the finite boundaries that the water provides to the landmass. The definition and interpretation of the terms small, isolation, and insularity are dependent upon the person defining them, as well as their experiences within such settings.

According to the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada (2003), First Nations communities are classified into four geographic categories. These include, *non-isolated*

[25] I had recently moved to Prince Edward Island when asked to partake in this activity. With a background in Geography and Environmental Studies, I felt it was important to include roads, but to also include a lot of green space, and even green technology as can be seen with the wind turbines that are presented in the illustration. I remember believing that islands, at that point in time, were like rural areas, where there was not a great deal of development that had taken place and that natural resources were plentiful.

communities, which can be accessed by road and are situated less than 90 kilometres from the services of a physician; *semi-isolated* communities, which can be accessed by road, but the closest physician services are over 90 kilometres away; *isolated communities*, which are those that have scheduled flights and good telephone service, but there is no road access in the community; and *remote isolated* communities, which are communities that have no regularly scheduled flights or road access, and also have minimal telephone and radio service.[26]

As the figure below illustrates, when compared to Figure 3 in Chapter 3, which classified Canada into isolated, rural, and urban subdivisions, the majority of the Aboriginal population in Canada is concentrated among regions of the country that are either seemingly isolated or sit on the boundaries of provinces, with some of the population located in or close to major metropolitan areas.

[26] According to the 2003 data provided by the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, 64.7% of First Nations communities were considered to be non-isolated; semi-isolated as well as isolated communities were similar to each other, averaging 16% each; and remote-isolated communities only accounted for 4% of communities. In 2003, the number of First Nations communities was 626.

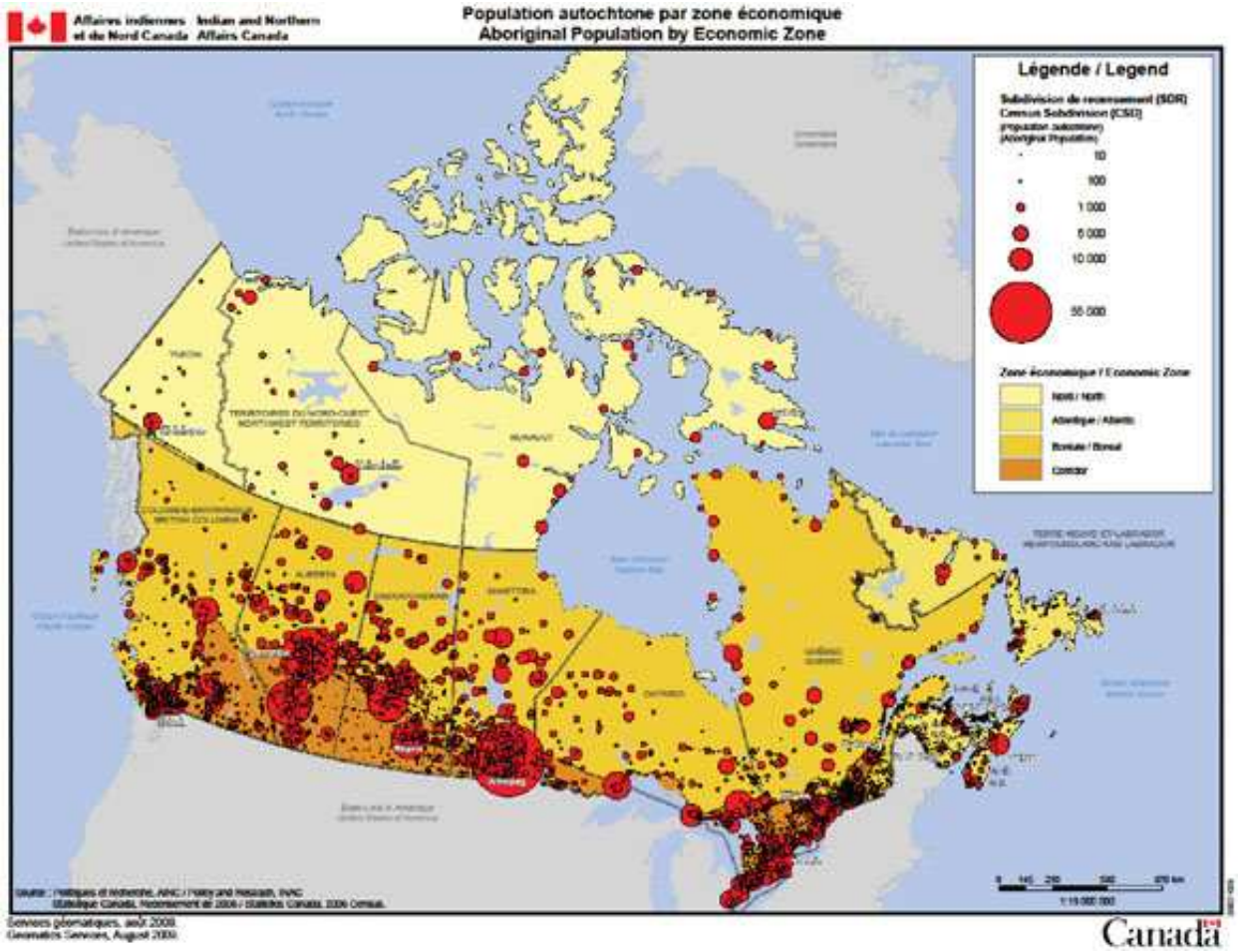

Figure 6. Geographic Distribution of Aboriginal People in Canada.

Source: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Renovating Programs in Support of Lands and Economic Development (2006).

The larger concentrations of Aboriginal people are located in areas that are increasingly rural and urban; however, the majority of the population is located in more isolated areas. In Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador, for example, the populations are located close to the water, away from urban areas and more densely populated areas of the province.

The specific locations of subgroups of Aboriginal people in Canada can be found in the following figures, which further illustrate the distribution of certain groups of Aboriginal people

and their relative isolation. It should be noted that some groups are located in more isolated areas than others, such as Inuit communities in the North, which, when compared to those who are of Métis descent, represent a very isolated group of people, in a geographic sense.

The Isolation of First Nations Communities in Canada. Today, there are over 2,000 First Nation communities in Canada, although this number varies over time depending upon the policy of the federal government. First Nations communities across Canada also vary in size (Frideres & Gadacz, 2011), but the amount of land allocated to them, despite increases in population size, does not change. Some communities cover only a few hectares of land, while the largest First Nation community in the country, which is located in Alberta, measures 900 square kilometers or 71.5 hectares per person (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008). The figure below represents the First Nations communities that are located in Canada.

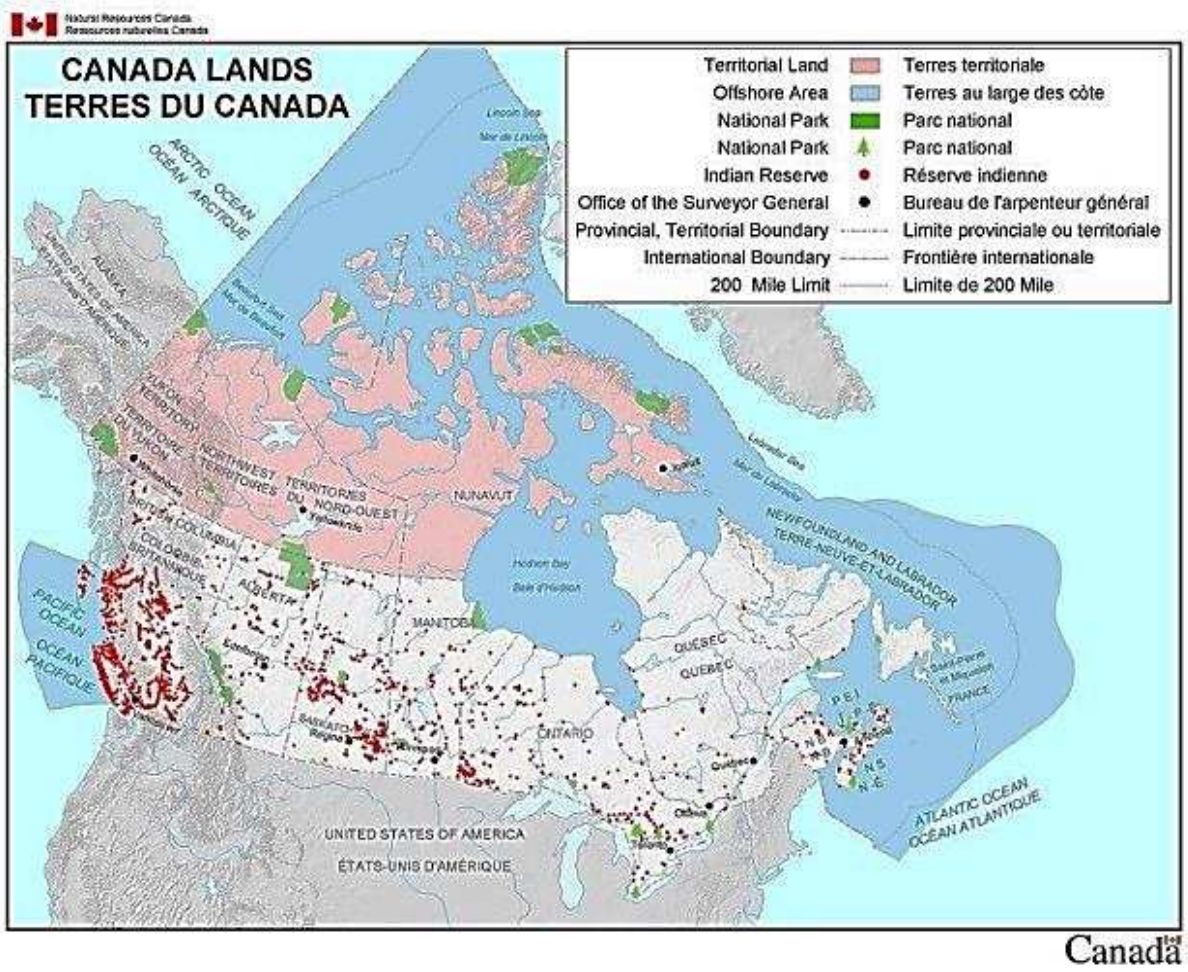

Figure 7. First Nation Communities in Canada.

Source: Natural Resources Canada, Canada Lands (2009)

The red dots on the map in this figure represent the locations of First Nations communities with the highest concentrations of First Nations communities located in the most Western provinces of the country. The further east or north on the map, the more sparse and isolated the First Nations communities become due to the limited access to various areas in this region. Compared to Figure 3, which was introduced in an early section of the third chapter, many of these communities are located in areas of the country that have been identified as being isolated, or rural, with some exceptions located in the western most provinces of the country.

Inuit People and Communities. Types of isolation that the Inuit people of Canada face include those involving aspects of mobility, transportation, and limited opportunities. As the figure below illustrates, the Inuit are located in the most northern parts of Canada, making them arguably the most isolated Aboriginal people in the country.

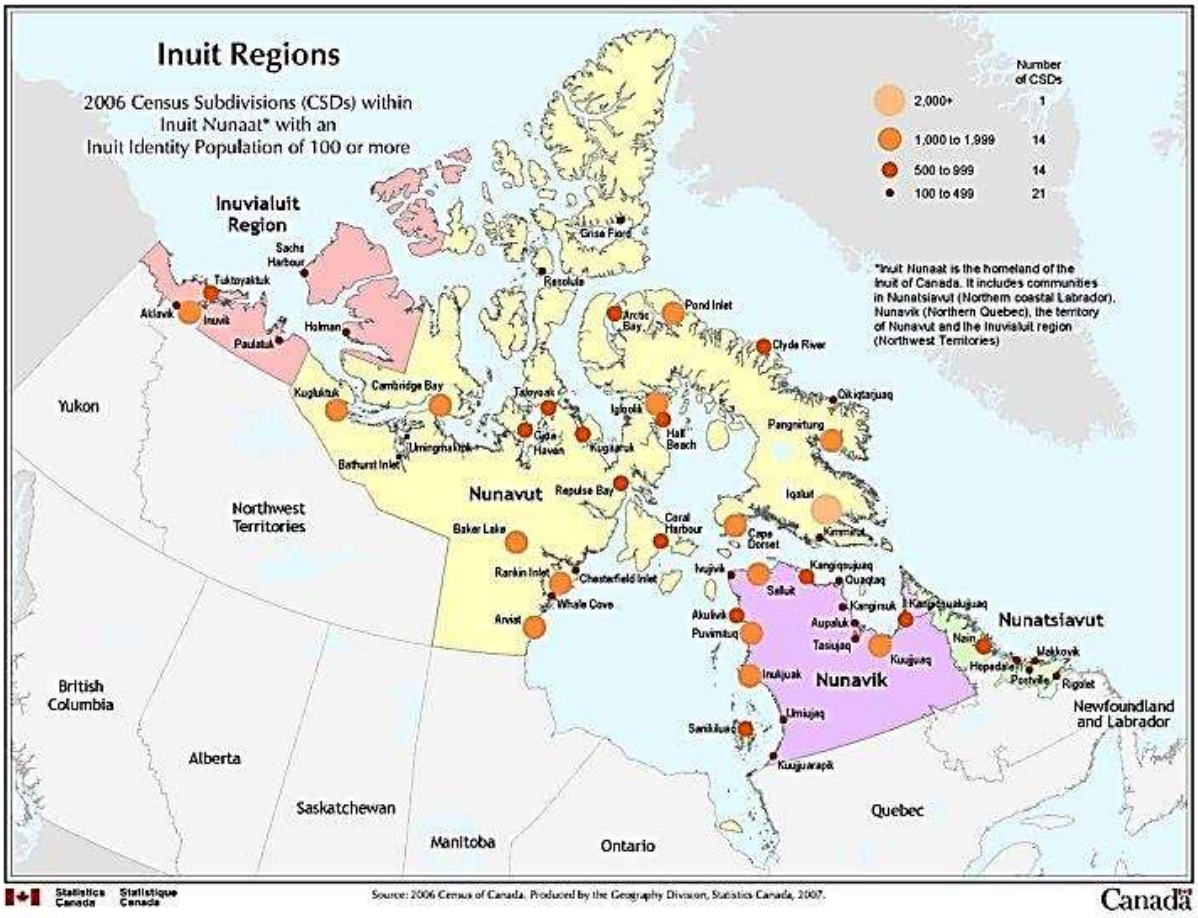

Figure 8. The Geographic Location of Inuit communities in Canada.

Source: Geography Division, Statistics Canada (2007)

When compared to the Census Subdivision Classification map, it should be noted that all of these regions represent areas of the country that are considered to be isolated, and in some cases,

according to the Inuit Health Branch, there are outliers which would be considered remotely isolated as well. As stated previously, however, isolation has positive and negative consequences for those who choose to live in communities or on islands that are considered to be isolated. In some cases, the more isolated the communities are, the more likely it is that particular cultures and identities will be preserved.

Métis People and Communities. Métis people have the highest population of people located in urban areas and are typically located in more culturally diverse areas. It is important to note, however, that there are also communities that are strictly Métis. The figure below shows the concentration of Metis people in Canada.

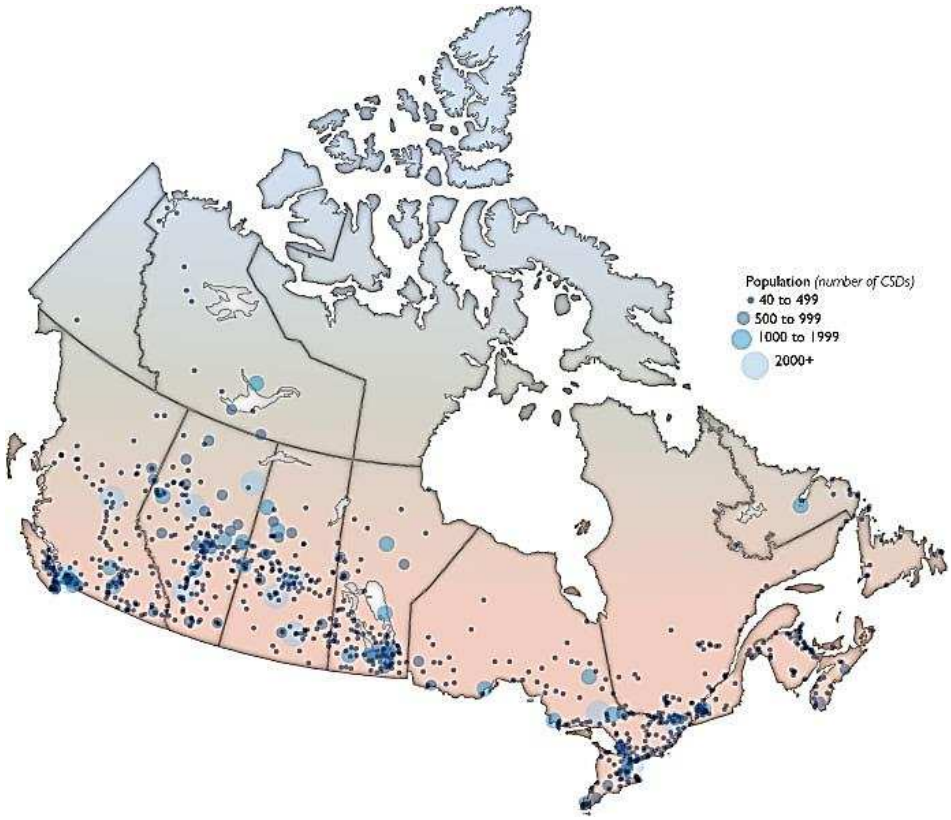

Figure 9. The Location and Concentration of those Identifying as Metis.

Source: Métis National Health Portal (n.d.)

At first glance, it may seem as though the Métis populations in the country are located in areas similar to First Nations people and communities. When compared to First Nations communities and the Census Subdivision Classification map, Métis people are located in more rural and urban regions of Canada than Inuit and First Nations peoples.

The Location of Peripheral Populations

Before presenting the data that was located in response to my second research question, I present one final geographic concept, which emerged from the data relating to the geographies of islands and Aboriginal communities. Along with the various other geographic constructs mentioned in this thesis, geographers also distinguish between two more types of areas, core and periphery. Core areas are locations that have the greatest capital, technological innovation, and management skills. In contrast, areas located on the periphery are those with less capital and whose primary assets are cheap labour and resources (Hiller, 2010). Along with these points, periphery is also associated with lower technology and less education (Fouberg, Murphy, & de Blij, 2009).

According to Stadel (n.d.), core regions are those "dominating [the] 'central' realm, while the peripheries tend to be isolated, dependent, and underprivileged" (p. 14). The figure below illustrates the core-periphery concept.

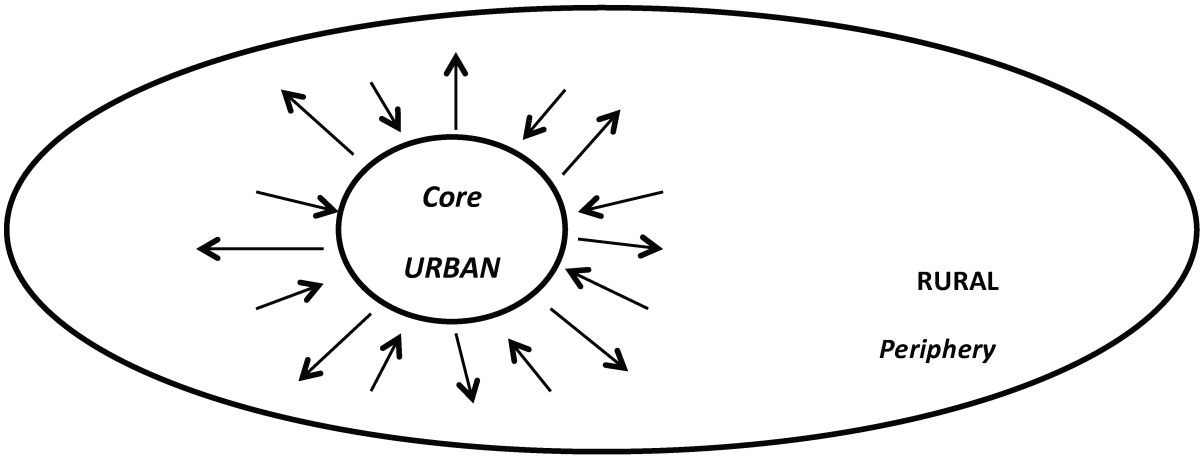

Figure 10. Core-Periphery Model.

Source: Tennant (2013), based on descriptions provided by Hiller (2010), Fouberg, Murphy, and de Blij (2009), and Stadel (n.d.).

The core typically represents urban areas, or areas that are more urban-like in nature with increased opportunities. The periphery represents areas that are more rural or isolated. The arrows in the figure above surrounding the core area represent people moving in and out of the urban or urban-like areas, to and from the periphery. In peripheral areas, jobs are more likely to involve natural resources such as mining in the Yukon, but there are often fewer jobs, lower wages, and less education. In some cases, however, as is seen in Yellowknife and White Horse, peripheral areas have higher per capital incomes. These areas, for the purpose of this definition, represent outlier communities. That being said, the working population in those areas is often transient, and many residents are left with jobs that pay far less.

Gagné (1994), a scholar who has written about the Cree as a *nation within a nation*, stated, “The emergence of peripheral regions can be found in a common history of imperialism and colonialism” (p. 27), and further indicated that one “should not assume that social evolutionism will someday eliminate all peripheral regions” (p. 27). Gagné was correct in her

statement that peripheral regions would not necessarily be eliminated. Scholars still discuss both small islands and Aboriginal communities as being peripheral, isolated communities.

Conclusion to the Section

In this section I have provided information relating to the themes of bound and finite spaces, isolation and insularity, and the location of peripheral populations. In doing so, I have essentially provided a geographic background of island and Aboriginal community locations, based on the research of scholars from various academic disciplines.

The familiarity that one can experience in small, isolated islands or in small, remote Aboriginal communities can be a unique feature, and one that is associated with many unique, positive attributes. Many of the positive aspects of insularity and smallness are spoken to by numerous island scholars, such as Royle (2001; 2006), Baldacchino (2005), Hau'ofa (1993), who discuss insularity and smallness as positive characteristics of islands, which are open to individual interpretation, and also by Vannini (2012) and Hayward (2012), who speak of islands in Canada that are populated by Aboriginal people. These positive, as well as negative characteristics which stem from isolation and smallness are presented in the following section of this chapter, where I provide the data related to the second research question.

Research Question 2: The Impact of Isolation on Aboriginal Culture and Identity

In addressing the first research question, I provided information suggesting that isolation and insularity, as geographic features, provide challenges for such communities, while alluding to their potential benefits. In this section, the data collected regarding research question two: *How does the isolation that some Aboriginal people experience living in remote Aboriginal communities and islanders living in small, isolated islands influence the culture and identity of*

those people living in those locations? is presented. In responding to this second research question, three main themes emerged that highlighted the ability for isolated areas to benefit from their very insularity. The emergent themes included, (a) *isolation and insularity as methods of preserving culture and identity*, (b) *place attachment as it develops from insular, isolated geographic locations*, and finally, (c) *isolation and insularity as ways to maintain ethnic homogeneity*.

Preservation of Culture and Identity

On small islands and in Aboriginal communities that are considered to be isolated or are located in areas that are considered to be more rural than urban, isolation and insularity allow for individual and collective cultures as well as individual and collective identities, to be preserved. According to Hilary Weaver (2001), a multicultural social worker and professor at the University of Buffalo, New York, whose academic research includes Indigenous populations and cultural identity, there are three types of Aboriginal identity; self-identity, community identity, and external identity. In the 1960s and 1970s "problems created by the movement of Aboriginal people from rural to urban centres" were the main focuses of academics interested in Aboriginal issues" (Silver, 2006, p. 28). At that time, it was noted that traditional ways and cultural values of Aboriginal people were essential aspects of Aboriginal identity. Appallingly, Europeans viewed Aboriginal tradition and culture as impediments to the most desirable outcome - assimilation (Silver, 2006). Despite those attempts to unfairly and brutally colonize Aboriginal people, "The identity of First Nations people continues to be strong, and most see themselves as Blackfoot or Mi'kmaq first and then as First Nation Canadians" (Frideres, 2011, p. 37). This way of identifying indicates that many Aboriginal people still embrace elements of traditional culture that are very different from those of mainstream Canada.

Language as a Method to Preserve Culture and Identity. As Slavik wrote in 2001, "Geographic location of the First Nations communities also is thought to have some importance in language maintenance" (p. 110). The Inuit people located in "remote/special access regions" of Canada represent "a much higher percentage of Aboriginal mother tongue speakers than those in rural or urban First Nations communities" (p. 110). The Inuit people of the North who speak what is known as "Inuktitut" have one of the strongest Aboriginal languages in Canada. Sixty-nine percent of the Inuit population can speak the language; however, their knowledge and the use of the language are declining (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008).

Likewise, First Nations languages "shape the relationship between the mind of the speaker and the person, thing, or event being described by language" (Statistics Canada, 2005). As Romero (2004) pointed out, languages are not alienable p*roducts*; rather, "they are active processes in the here and now with deep ties to a people's past" (Frideres, 2011, p. 98). When compared to the Métis people, who are typically located in more urban areas, less than 3% of the population under the age of 44 can speak and understand an Aboriginal language (Statistics Canada, 2012b). First Nations people, who, as stated previously, are becoming increasingly mobile and migrating to urban areas, speak over 60 Aboriginal languages in total. With over half of the population located off-reserve, only 29% stated that they were able to "speak an Aboriginal language well enough to carry a conversation" (p. 8). When these data are separated further to represent those living on reserve and off reserve, the amounts varied drastically, with 51% of the on reserve population being able to speak and understand a conversation in an Aboriginal language, compared to only 12% of those living off reserve.

One's cultural identity is more easily maintained for those living in smaller, more isolated communities where individuals represent part of the majority population, rather than that of a

minority population. The example of language maintenance provided in this section is a representation of how a cultural identity can be affected when individuals find themselves in a minority situation. The limited contact that those communities have with mainstream societies makes them able to maintain traditional knowledge, languages, and belief systems (Slavik as cited in Frideres, 2011). In the case of islanders and Aboriginal people represented in this research, this points insinuates that having limited contact with the dominant societies located in urban areas and on neighbouring continents helps to preserve culture and identity.

Place attachment. In 1976 Relph stated that virtually everyone has "a deep association with and consciousness of the places where [they] were born and grew up, where [they] live now, or where [they] have had particularly moving experiences" (p. 43). He further stated, "This association seems to constitute a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security" (p. 43). One decade prior to Relph's statement, Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983) stated that place attachment was conceived as a person's intense emotional attachment to places and settings. Based on the definitions and statements made by Relph (1976) and Proshasky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983), it can be said that everyone has a special place and the ability to develop an attachment to a place whether they have been part of a small, isolated community or have lived all of their life in a busy, diversely populated area. The difference, for Aboriginal people, is that ethnic homogeneity is often at the core of their attachment to place.

John Richards (2001), a professor at Simon Fraser University and Social Policy Chair at the C.D. Howe Institute whose interests include Aboriginal issues in Canada, stated that Aboriginal people who wish to "remain as faithful as possible to cultural traditions will mostly choose to live in rural Canada," especially those who have First Nations status and are permitted to reside in First Nations communities (p. 2). In turn, Lawrence (2010) explained that the "land

and the web of relationships that the land sustains are at the heart of what it means to be 'the people'" (p. 508). The land conveys stories, songs, and ceremonies, which allow for Aboriginal languages to be sustained and also allow for younger generations to be taught "who they are as part of 'the people'" (p. 508).

Keith Basso (1997), a linguistic and cultural anthropologist whose work stems from his experiences with the Western Apache, discussed this traditional knowledge as wisdom that sits in places. He stated that social and cultural knowledge, as well as guidance, which he more commonly refers to as *wisdom*, is based on one's experiences within a place. He further stated that experience arises from places and landscapes, which translates to both social and cultural knowledge. Even individuals who no longer reside in Aboriginal communities feel that their home communities remain an important part of who they are culturally and individually (Wilson, 2010; Cardinal, 2006). A participant in the *8th Fire* television series provided an exceptional example of this when she stated, "I really believe that where I came from made me the woman that I am today." An Aboriginal community in Canada is like no other Canadian community because everything is tailored to a specific Aboriginal culture such as Ojibway, Cree, or Mi'kmaq. Visitors to the area adapt to the specific values and beliefs of particular First Nations communities (Wilson, 2000), unlike most other communities in Canada, even those that are considered to be rural or isolated, because the majority of the country is considered to be multicultural.

The ceremonial powwow as a way to connect or re-connect to place. Along with attachment to areas that are perceived as being greener or more rural, Aboriginal culture and identity are celebrated in special places, which hold meaning for many Aboriginal people. These types of special cultural celebrations involve sharing Aboriginal culture and languages through

what is known as a powwow. The ceremonial powwow is an example of how traditional Aboriginal culture and identity can be preserved and celebrated. As a respondent detailed to Valaskakis (2005), "At the Bear River pow wow grounds, I was drawn by the beat of the drum into a circle of socialization, a mixture of forceful, fragmented feelings of community and spirituality framed by the closeness of my great-grand-mother" (p. 151). Frideres (2011) stated that, for some who seek to maintain the kinship within Aboriginal communities, participating in drumming, even as a member of the audience, and attending powwows, remain an important part of maintaining Aboriginal culture. For others, "braiding their hair, using sweet grass in the home, and adorning their bodies with 'Native' art such as earrings and bracelets" allows them to feel connected to the land and their culture, as they are all "symbolic aspects of First Nations culture," which stem from historic, traditional cultures and belief systems which are kept alive thought various practices (p. 38).

Each powwow, as Valaskakis (2005) explained, "reflects the cultural specificity of a tribal nation, a unique community, a particular ceremony" (p. 152). They

> Express certain cultural similarities and a deeply felt and shared sense of 'being indian' that threads through the dichotomies used to analyze power and identity - belonging and exclusion, knowledge and ignorance, control and resistance - all signified in the rhythm of the drum (p. 152).

For individuals who choose not to live in Aboriginal communities, travelling to a place where a powwow is being held can be a very powerful and meaningful way to connect to the land and remains an important part of celebrating Aboriginal identity, which "recalls a kaleidoscope of deeply felt, ambiguous images of power and identity" (Valaskakis, 2005, p. 151). In turn, this

point allows many Aboriginal people to reconnect in a safe area where they typically represent the majority populace.

Ethnic Homogeneity

In small, isolated areas, such as on islands and in remote Aboriginal communities in Canada, residents are often able to enjoy a sense of belonging in a setting where the majority of the population represents ethnic homogeneity. This majority population setting allows for residents of these communities to more easily maintain their culture and identity. Due to the state of some First Nation communities, Steckley (2012) stated that many students who he teaches wonder why Aboriginal people maintain such an attachment to their small, rural, often isolated areas. Being a professor who teaches immigrants in Canada about Canadian society, he stated that for many Native people the reserve is their "home and Native land" (2012, p. 130). As such, in many cases, these communities represent geographic settings where Aboriginal people represent the majority populace, which, in locations such as urban centres, where Aboriginal people represent a minority within a majority setting, are often subject to stares, as well as discrimination from other Canadians (Steckley, 2012). The ability for Aboriginal people in Canada to be among those who they closely resemble also increases the attachment that they feel to those specific places.

Conclusion to the Section

The research surrounding Aboriginal culture and identity in Canada, as they emerge or are preserved by varying degrees of isolation, posits that isolated Aboriginal communities may benefit from their geographic isolation. As Frideres (2011) stated in relation to Aboriginal people in Canada, "Some people argue the strong human attachment to an ethnic group in turn produces a high ethnic identity" (p. 37). As the figure below illustrates, the attachment to place

that many Aboriginal people feel exemplifies the attachment to ethnic groups, and emergence of certain ethnic cultures and identities.

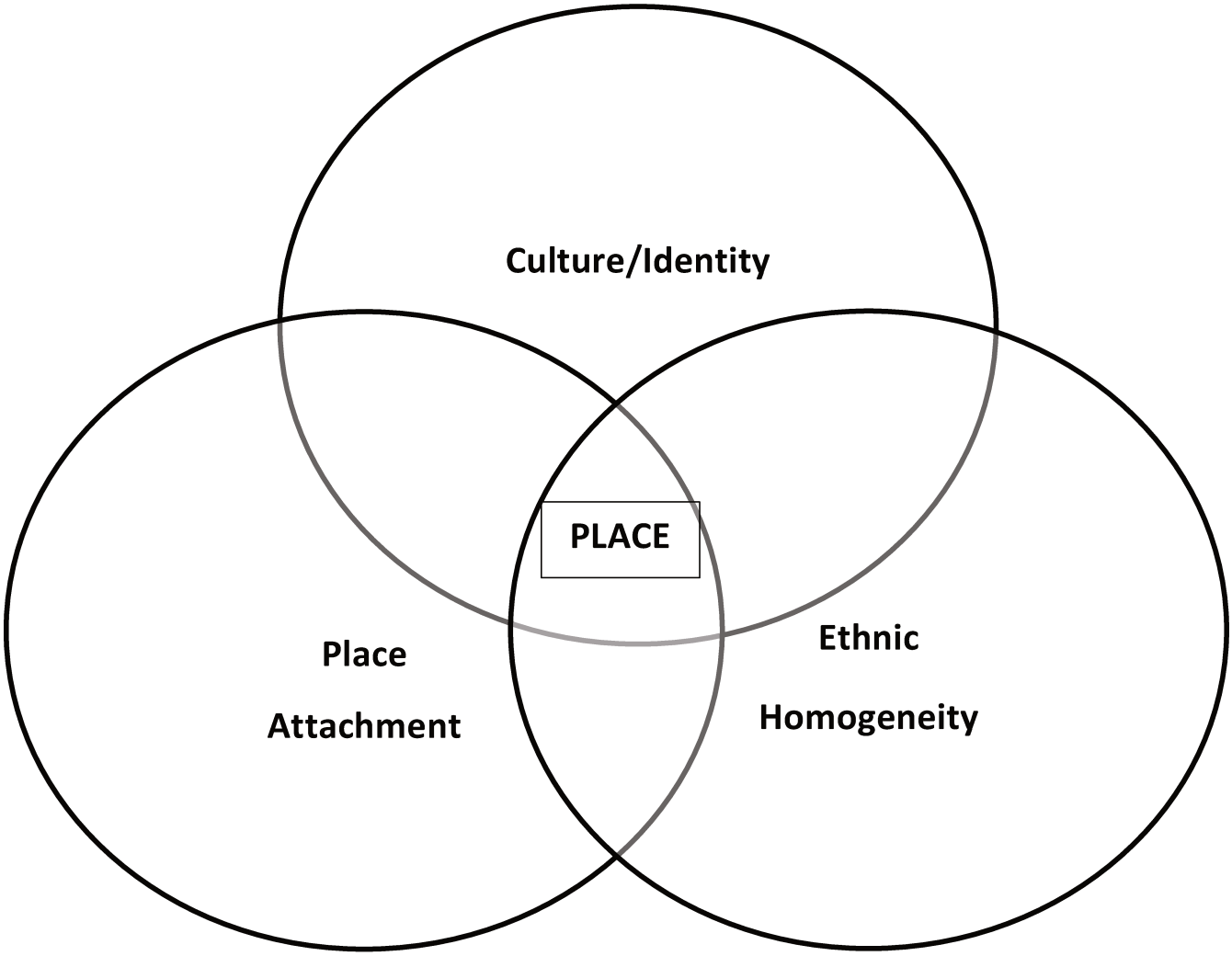

Figure 11. Characteristics of Human Geography as stemming from *Place*

Conversely, as Lawrence (2010) suggested, although living in an isolated area aids in the preservation of culture and identity "[c]urrent understandings of identity stress its multiple, fragmented and shifting nature" (2010, p. 509).

Along with the positive characteristics that stem from the isolation of various Aboriginal communities in Canada, there are also negative characteristics associated with living in an isolated region. Those negative aspects of isolation are discussed in the following section of this chapter and are based on the geographic construct that Corbett (2007) has referred to as *learning to leave*.

Research Question #3: The Impact of Mobility and Migration on Aboriginal Culture and Identity

As the data corresponding to the previous research question suggest, the geographical isolation that many Aboriginal people face living in isolated Aboriginal communities aids in the preservation of unique Aboriginal cultures and identities. That being said, living in an Aboriginal community or on a small island is not ideal, due to the same geographic characteristics that makes them, as well as their people, so unique. In many cases, as the data in response to this third research question suggest, Aboriginal people in rural, isolated areas of Canada often choose to or are required to migrate from their communities, frequently choosing to relocate to areas that are perceived as having more opportunities. This shift in geographic settings impacts the lives of Aboriginal people, and, in many cases, as this section illustrates, also impacts Aboriginal culture and identity.

Analysis of the third research question, "How do mobility and the migration of Aboriginal people away from isolated Aboriginal communities and into non-Aboriginal communities that are more urban in nature influence their sense of culture and identity?" resulted in the emergence of three main themes. Those themes are: (a) *Migration for perceived opportunities*, (b) *Shifts in identity and loss of cultures, as well as loss of place attachment*, and

lastly, (c) *Churn*, the movement by migrants back and forth from home and away. Those themes are located in the following three subsections, which focus on mobility and migration of Aboriginal people in Canada.

Migration for Increased Opportunities

Norris and Clatworthy (2011) stated that "Aboriginal populations within Canada have, historically, experienced significantly different levels and patterns of urbanization and migration than mainstream populations" (p. 13). The most frequently mentioned reason as to why individuals choose to remain in a community is because they hold great value in being able to be near their families and friends (Dahl & Sorenson, 2010). But, for some Aboriginal people in Canada, remaining in an Aboriginal community may not be an option due to the lack of employment, education, and social opportunities available to them. As Barcus and Brunn (2010), who have written about mobility and place attachment, stated, "Migration represents a complex interplay of individual perceptions, needs, and desires, coupled with the ability (financial, legal) to move, and real or perceived benefits offered at the destination" (p. 283). Geographers from various sub-disciplines of the field, as well as policymakers, and researchers from government organizations, such as Statistics Canada, often state that increased opportunities are found in larger, more densely and diversely populated areas of the world. A 2004 report written for Statistics Canada stated that "People often migrate to improve personal and economic circumstances for themselves and their families" (Audas & McDonald, 2004, p. 17). In the context of this study, this point has been interpreted to mean that Aboriginal people often migrating to mainland areas that are considered to be more urban-like.

Centuries ago, almost all Aboriginal people lived in communities where their ethnicity and culture represented a majority of the population, and they were typically located in rural,

isolated areas of the country. Today, the geography of Aboriginal people in Canada is very different. According to Statistics Canada (2006) Aboriginal people are more likely to move than non-Aboriginal people. The 2006 census stated that of 1,172,790 Aboriginal people in Canada, nearly 74% of Aboriginal people are now located off reserve (Statistics Canada, 2006a).[27] There are several reasons for this movement, most notably, according to Lobo and Peters (2001), Cardinal (2006), Frideres and Gadazc (2008), and Howard and Proulx (2011), Aboriginal people have migrated from their more traditional communities to urban areas due to the lack of opportunities that are available to them in their areas.

Living conditions in Aboriginal communities are not often ideal; however, traditional Aboriginal communities often reinforce "the association of [Aboriginal people] with traditional lifeways" (Peters, 2000, p. 48). These places continue "to provide a haven from the pressures of Euro-Canadian urban society" (Frideres & Gadazc, 2008, p. 62), but at the same time, they remain settings where very few opportunities, whether social, economic, or educational, are available to community members (Frideres & Gadazc, 2008).[28]

Cooke and Belanger (2006) wrote that "The urbanization of the Canadian Aboriginal population has received considerable attention since the 1970s" (p. 141). For some, "Leaving the community . . . is leaving behind struggles and problems and difficulties and crisis" (Respondent, *8th Fire* TV series, episode 1). For others, it provides a chance to "participate in the world" (Kent Monkman, Aboriginal artist and participant in *8th Fire* TV series). As a child migrating to an urban centre with his family, Monkman, now a well-known Aboriginal artist, stated that there was "a very deliberate choice to create opportunities for us, to get a good

[27] Of 1,172,790 Aboriginal people, 864,315 were living off-reserve. Of those living off-reserve, 623,470 were located in urban areas and 240,845 were located in rural areas.
[28] All Aboriginal communities are not considered to lack amenities; therefore, it is important to note that there is a "significant variation . . . in Aboriginal mobility and migration" depending on the community (Silver, 2006, p. 216).

education, to have opportunities to get music lessons . . .” He believed that “[Aboriginal people] at some point want to live in cities” (*8th Fire*). As Norris and Clatworthy (2003) stated, however, “the significance of population movements has been underestimated in the sociology of Aboriginal peoples and warrants serious consideration relating to the issues of programs and services in urban areas” (p. 51). Aboriginal people continue to attempt to migrate to urban settings as Monkman and his family did. The following subsections provide data regarding migration for educational purposes, as well as employment opportunities.

Migration for Educational Purposes

Much has been written about Aboriginal education in Canada, especially related to the inconsistencies of Aboriginal education when compared to the education attainment and obtainment levels of non-Aboriginal students (Richards, 2008). Unless an individual lives in a town or city where a post-secondary institution is located, they typically have to commute or migrate to a location where such institutions exist. In rural areas, individuals may travel greater distances to attend post-secondary school, and for those located in isolated areas, such as some Aboriginal people, the distances traveled increases. As the data presented in this section illustrate, migrating for educational opportunities is not necessarily voluntary. In many cases, depending on the geography of the people involved, migration can happen out of necessity, and in many cases, when Aboriginal people are migrating, they face many hardships when moving to a place where they are a minority.

For many non-Aboriginal Canadians, the transition to university represents a positive experience (Chowa & Healey, 2008). It typically involves new opportunities and provides individuals with the ability to develop personally. Conversely, this transition involves many

changes and can be met with mixed emotions, which are often exemplified when geographic repositioning is involved (Chowa & Healey, 2008). Many students suffer from "feelings of displacement," because they have left the place that provided them with a sense of safety, security, and identity (Chowa and Healey, 2008; McAndrew, 1998; Tognoli, 2003). For Aboriginal students, this mobility is a multiple disruption, because it involves leaving a community in which they are likely to represent part of the majority population. This departure also often entails leaving their immediate families and community, which requires the ability to build new networks and understand the different cultures and contexts present in urban areas (Silver, 2006).

For David Newhouse (2011), leaving his community to gain a post-secondary education was an easy transition. He wrote "I left my Indian reserve community at the age of 19, three and a half decades ago, in 1972, to attend university. I have not returned either to live or work" (p. 23). Newhouse, unlike many others, was able to access networks of Aboriginal people who, like him, "came from Indian reserves to the city to study, to join family who had preceded them, to take care of family or friends, to take a job, to explore what the city had to offer" (p. 23). In more recent years, Aboriginal people have begun to remain in urban areas instead of moving back to their home communities of origin (Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, 2013).

Migration for Employment

In mainstream society, when the unemployment rate is close to 10%, the federal government typically implements policies and programs in an attempt to address high unemployment numbers (Frideres, 2011). For First Nations people, however, as Frideres stated, "this is not the case" (2011, p. 175). According to Richards (2001) Aboriginal communities,

especially First Nations, "cannot generate more than a small fraction of the productive well-paying jobs required if the recent rural-based Aboriginal population is to escape poverty" (p. 9). Unfortunately, communities that are considered to be isolated, such as Aboriginal communities, are not considered to be ideal areas for businesses to establish (Frideres, 2011).

The less than ideal location of many Aboriginal communities does not often attract business owners. For those communities that are recognized as belonging to First Nations, the ramifications of establishing a franchise are barriers to economic growth of Aboriginal communities. Businesses owned by non-Aboriginal people are less likely to establish any type of store within a First Nations community because of the "negative tax implications and the uncertainty of land title" (Frideres, 2011, p. 176). These implications have caused major discrepancies between the on-reserve and off-reserve populations of Aboriginal people, and a reason why many First Nations are choosing to leave their places of origin.

In 2006, the number of First Nations people who were unemployed and living on-reserve was more than triple the official national average of Canada at that point in time (Frideres and Gadacz, 2011). A lawyer who was part of the first *8th Fire* episode stated, "Ideally, I would be very close to the land in order to practice some traditions." Unfortunately, due to her profession, that was not a viable option. Many Aboriginal people, like this participant, are living and working in cities and towns (Steckley, 2003), and as the population shifts from areas that are considered to be geographically isolated, to urban-like areas that are home to diverse cultures, Aboriginal culture, traditions, and identities are, in many cases, beginning to change.

Minority in a Majority Populace: Shifts and Losses

In 1994, Elias and Scotson conducted a study of insider and outsider relationships, which emphasized negative stereotypes and threats that residents of an area associate with those who are not considered to belong in certain places. In 2001, Crow, Allan, and Summers' data suggested that such stereotyping still existed and further stated that outsiders often contest being designated as inferior or marginalized. For many who migrate to a more densely populated area where the populace is increasingly heterogeneous, there is a shift in identity as well as a loss of culture and attachment to places of origin, while attachments to new places are born. Cardinal (2006) suggested that although a trend existed, which showed that Aboriginal people were migrating to urban areas; there was little general information available regarding that segment of the Aboriginal population in Canada. In more recent years, scholars, such as Peters (2000; 2002; 2003; 2005; 2009), Frideres and Gadacz (2008; 2011), and Wilson (2005), and as well as policymakers, have devoted much of their scholarly work to such issues.

Peters (2010) suggested that much of the discussion surrounding urban Aboriginal people within cities has focused on Aboriginal urbanization as a social problem, focusing on issues such as poverty and the pressure of colonization to assimilate into a mainstream, urban lifestyle. Several sources have highlighted the significance of cultural survival and adaptation within urban areas (Cairns, 2000; Newhouse, 2000; Peters as cited in Peters, 2002; RCAP, 1996). However, those who migrate from an isolated location, especially a remote First Nations community, face greater cultural challenges than those who migrate to the urban from a rural location that is in closer proximity to an urban location (Heritz, 2010).

When living in urban centres, although an Aboriginal individual may feel that he/she represents Aboriginality, the circumstances surrounding living in a diversely populated area with

little connection to the land makes it very difficult to engage in more traditional components of Aboriginal lifestyle (Frideres, 2011). Haluza-De-Lay, O'Riley, Cole, and Agyeman (2009) stated "Land is central to identify for indigenous peoples–often in ways difficult for non-Aboriginal Canadians to understand" (p. 20). An example of this statement would include an individual who originally lived in an isolated Aboriginal community, moved to the city, and lost their language. Yet, this individual still wanted to practice traditional aspects of an Aboriginal way of life. These may include using sacred medicines or attending sweats (Frideres, 2011). When living in an urban area, experiencing such tradition may be difficult for many Aboriginal people because in the city they represent part of a minority, unless they are lucky enough to be part of a larger urban Aboriginal community. This is not possible in all provinces, however, and frequently Aboriginal people in urban areas still remain marginalized.

The movement of Aboriginal people to the city is often from one marginalized space to another (Silver, 2006). As Razack stated (2002), "The nearly absolute geographical separation of the colonizer and the colonized" (p. 129) is replicated as Aboriginal people move to the city. This spatial mapping of who spaces belonged to and which identities assume power for particular geographic settings resulted in urban places being increasingly viewed as places where Aboriginal people were "out of place." (Peters, 2005b, p. 343).

Shifts in identity/loss of culture. As previously mentioned, the term assimilation refers to adjusting one's own beliefs in order to be accepted in a White-dominated, colonized society, Aboriginal people are often unfairly made to conform to Eurocentric views and lifestyles. This point means that the unique, traditional cultures and identities of Aboriginal people become lost when they take up residence in an urban area. Culture and attachment to places of origin are affected, as well.

Culture. Culture plays an integral part of what it means to be Aboriginal in Canada. As Frideres explained (2011), "The beliefs and culture of a people are embedded in their language and are given expression by it" (p. 98). For those in the city who do not practice traditional Aboriginal ceremonies or languages, they, along with future generations of their families can lose their Aboriginal culture completely, while assimilating into mainstream Canadian societies. For others who grow up in the city, their culture is not often celebrated, or they are brought up knowing nothing about it, because their culture of origin is replaced by that of mainstream Canada. For Tyson Houseman, a young urban Aboriginal man, Aboriginal communities represented a very unfamiliar, unknown territory for most of his life.

As a young Aboriginal man who grew up in an urban area and participated in the *8th Fire* television series, Tyson explained that at home, "There was no Aboriginal culture" (episode 1). Part of the reason for this, as Cardinal stated with regard to the city of Vancouver, is because cultural activities and language fluency in urban settings are rare and deteriorating. Another reason for this, as a respondent to Silver, Hay and Gorzen (2006), who interviewed urban Aboriginal people and asked whether Aboriginal culture was important to urban residents stated that some individuals do not "bother with [their culture]" (p. 51), nor do they celebrate their culture so as to preserve it and teach their children about it.

Silver, Hay, and Gorzen (2006), interviewed an older man who was a longtime urban resident. He stated "I've never been brought up in my culture, I've never really practised it" (Silver, Hay, & Gorzen, 2006, p. 51). Another participant to this study explained that she had "never been involved in that" because she was "a Christian" (p. 51). Her father, conversely, did practice and retain aspects of his culture, as did many other survey participants. These scholars further stated that many participants were interested in knowing more about their culture, but

explained that learning about such a culture in a large urban area has proven difficult for many. Another participant involved in this same urban study stated that he had not celebrated his Aboriginal heritage since childhood, when he had lived on reserve. He expanded further stating that "if they had something like that out here [in the urban area where he currently lives] it would be good" (p. 50). Another gentleman who was interviewed expressed a newfound interest in his culture, stating, "I'm now finding in the last two years that I actually have a craving and a desire to find out more about my cultural past" (p. 50).

In their conclusion, Silver, Hay, and Gorzen (2006) stated "even for those minimally involved ... there [was] still a connection to their culture through parents and/or home communities" (p. 51), which meant a great deal to those who wanted to maintain their culture and identity. They advised, "The promotion of Aboriginal cultural activities [in urban settings] may be a way to begin to build community and to recreate a positive sense of identity" (p. 51) for urban Aboriginal people. Along with this, Aboriginal organizations, such as Friendship Centres, which represent safe areas where Aboriginal people can celebrate their culture in urban areas, offer one way in which urban Aboriginal residents can begin to deal with the host of difficulties that they face in such culturally diverse areas (Silver, 2006).

Aboriginal people who participated in the Assembly of First Nations Survey (2011) were asked a similar question to those who participated in the research conducted by Silver, Hay, and Gorzen. One particular question in this survey asked urban Aboriginal participants whether Aboriginal cultures, languages, histories, and knowledge were important to them. Over 85% of those surveyed (309 respondents), stated that they strongly agreed, despite having moved to an urban setting. For those interviewed by Berry (1999), the issue of the importance of language

among Aboriginal people again emerged as a central component to maintaining Aboriginal cultural identity. With regard to those findings, Berry stated:

> Those who had maintained their language were very happy and proud to have it. A large percentage of those who had lost it were adamant that regaining their language was a top priority for them and their children. One participant declared: "One value of my culture is language. This is the most important thing to deal with for the next several generations. (p. 22)

Maintaining language in a diverse area in which you represent the minority, however, is very difficult for many, as was expressed by an Aboriginal person who was living in Toronto when interviewed by researcher Kathleen Wilson (2000). This particular participant expressed issues surrounding the accessibility of ceremonies, which reflect not only Aboriginal cultural values and beliefs, but specific cultural values and beliefs for various Aboriginal groups and nations. She explained that:

> There are all three [Cree, Mohawk and Ojibway] different nations. Now we all believe in the Creator and we all believe in the medicine wheel and each one is a little different and each one has a different slant on it. But we are all clumped together here in one pot (Wilson, 2000, p. 245).

She further stated that, when all are gathered in one place, one culture has to be selected, and in an urban area, where various groups and nations of Aboriginal people are located, it is very difficult to choose who should be celebrated. This celebration is especially difficult when people from one Aboriginal group, such as Inuit or Métis, want to celebrate within a space (Wilson, 2000). For First Nations, on reserve, everything is adapted to their way of life, and that is

understood by visitors (Wilson, 2000), but in an urban area, it is difficult to decide what should be celebrated and when.

David Chartrand (1993), leader of the Manitoba Métis Federation and past president of the National Association of Friendship Centres, stated that social activities, such as traditional celebrations, bring Aboriginal people together and strengthen their relationships with other people. He believed that relationships between people and places were important for Aboriginal people wanting to feel a sense of security, especially for those who felt that they were left out by mainstream society (p. 565). He also explained:

> Aboriginal culture in the cities is threatened in much the same way as Canadian culture is threatened by American culture, and it therefore requires a similar commitment to its protection. Our culture is at the heart of our people, and without awareness of Aboriginal history, traditions and ceremonies, we are not whole people, and our communities lose their strength…Cultural education also works against the alienation that the cities hold for our people. (p. 565)

Today, as the research, as well as statements made by Aboriginal people, which have been included in this chapter show, the issue of Aboriginal people feeling alienated within city boundaries is still a concern. It is difficult to maintain culture and language in a diversely populated city, especially when the origins of culture, languages, and traditions are so heavily based on the land.

Identity. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1993) stated that maintaining "Aboriginal identity in an environment that is usually indifferent and often hostile to Aboriginal people" is very difficult (p. 2). As Berry (1999), a consultant with for the Royal Commission on

Aboriginal Peoples (1993) said, individuals who experience what is referred to as *intercultural contact*, the matter of who they are is an issue that emerges and remains at the forefront. For Aboriginal people in Canada who have grown up in a majority setting, Berry (1992, as cited in Berry 1999) stated "It is only during intercultural contact that their cultural identity may become a matter of concern" to themselves as well as to others (p. 2). When Aboriginal people from rural or isolated settings enter the urban, they often have to "re-invent themselves" (*8th Fire*, episode 1) or attempt to maintain the culture and identity that was established in their places of origin. Some are able to remain faithful to their culture and maintain their identity, while others find it more difficult and attempt to assimilate into mainstream Canadian society. There are individuals who are able to become part of that society. Others, however, are unable to do so.

As Frideres (2011) suggested, the identity of an Aboriginal person, just like that of any other individual, is continuously shaped and reshaped. Identity is not something that is acquired solely at birth, nor does it remain fixed. In the case of Aboriginal people, the intercultural contact that they experience when among non-Aboriginal Canadians often results in "cultural disruption" and can lead to the reduced well-being of Aboriginal people, as well as identity confusion and loss (Berry, 1999, p. 2).

As highlighted previously, language is very important to Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Ignace and Ignace (2009) argued, "The key to identity and retention of culture is one's ancestral language" (p. 421), and, as the research previously presented has shown, in isolated areas, such as Inuit territory, maintaining language is more plausible because of the homogeneity of the geographic setting. In areas that are more culturally diverse, maintaining, and even practicing an Aboriginal language is not as easily accomplished.

The two most important pillars to Aboriginal identity, as identified by Darnell (2011), are language and land (p. 42). He stated that neither of these can be maintained by one individual person and that the preservation and revitalization of Aboriginal language and culture ultimately depend on family, community, and, for many Aboriginal people, their Aboriginal communities as a "home place," regardless of their place of residence (Darnell as cited in Howard & Proulx, 2011, p. 42). Unfortunately, due to this disconnect from Aboriginal communities of origin, once individuals move to urban areas, Aboriginal languages, which are crucial to identity and culture sometimes become lost. As Figure 12 below illustrates, the further an Aboriginal person lives from their traditional lands, the less they know of their tradition languages

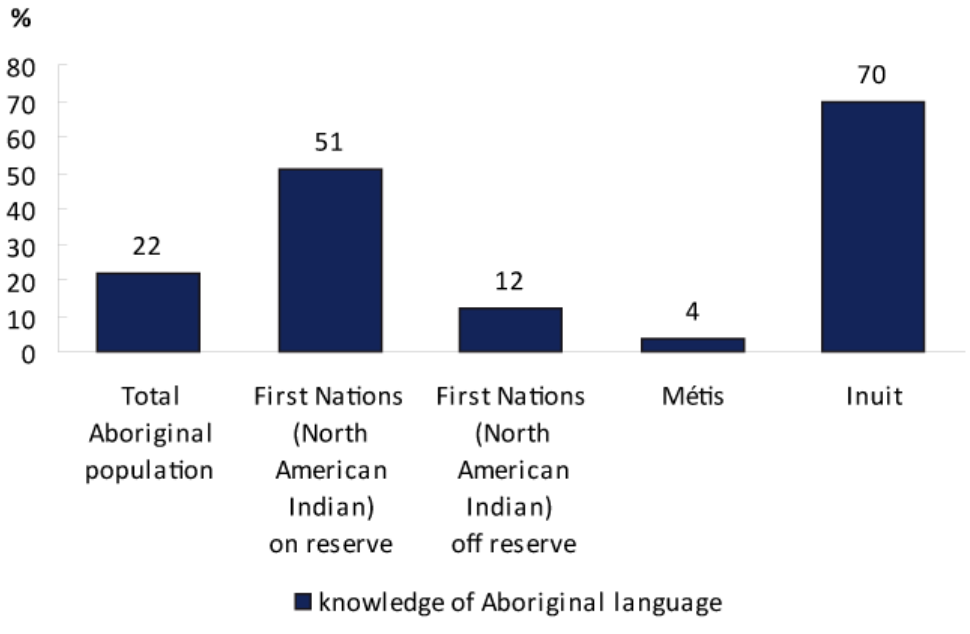

Figure 12. Population of Aboriginal People with Knowledge of at least one Aboriginal Language, 2006

Source: Statistics Canada (2010)

This figure refers to any Aboriginal persons in Canada who maintain the ability to conduct a conversation in an Aboriginal language. The Inuit, as the most geographically isolated group of Aboriginal people, have the highest percentage of population able to speak an Aboriginal language. First Nations have the second highest language retention rate and represent the second most isolated group of Aboriginal people. Those who live off-reserve, as well as those of Métis descent, have the lowest language retention rates. During the time of this study, only 22% of the Aboriginal population could speak an Aboriginal language.

In research conducted by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (2008) one Aboriginal respondent indicated that the reason that his language has been lost is because he was told to *act White* by his parents. He was told that by acting White he and his family had a better chance for success in an urban setting. The respondent believed that acting White caused confusion not only for individuals, but also for Aboriginal communities. The respondent further stated:

> I still have a lot of anger inside of me. It is the same old story, the white man looks at you as an Indian. And you go to your Indian brothers and they look at you as a white man because your attitudes, beliefs and values are constructed in that area. It's a real struggle for me (Berry, 1999, p. 18).

Among Aboriginal people, these identity issues, which make it seem as though they are caught between two very different worlds, are referred to as *identity politics*. These identity politics can be very detrimental to Aboriginal people, because they then wonder where they belong and whether they are, in fact, still Aboriginal persons (St. Denis, 2007). For those who grow up in an urban setting all their lives, there are additional problems surrounding identity. Tyson

Houseman, who was referenced in a previous section of this chapter, also stated that while growing up "I didn't, I knew that I was Native, but I didn't understand what that meant" (*8th Fire*, 2012). His mother was of non-Aboriginal descent and his father had First Nations status and belonged to the Cree nation. Growing up in an urban area, he knew that he was different from mainstream society. He knew that he was Aboriginal, but he knew nothing of his identity or culture until much later in life when he began asking questions.

Tyson is not the only young adult living in an urban area that was not aware of his culture and identity. As the figure below shows, for many Aboriginal people, especially First Nations living off-reserve, it is the younger generations who have the lowest language retention rates.

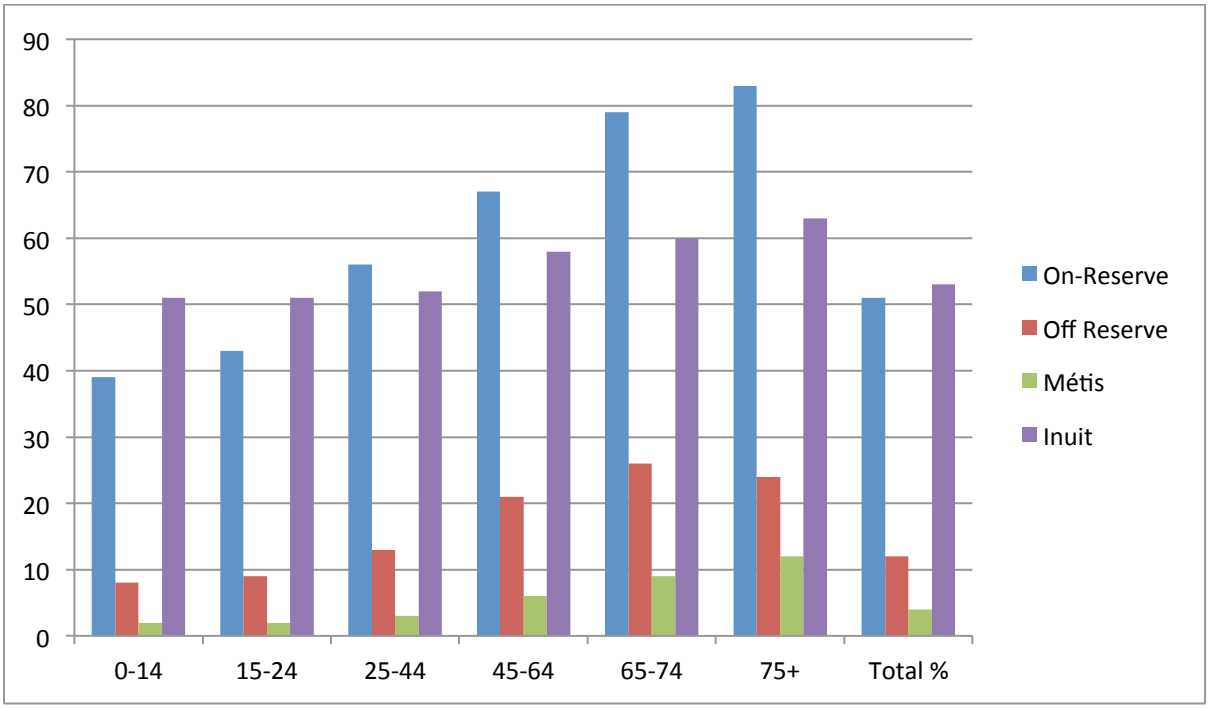

Figure 13. Percentage of First Nation, Inuit, and Metis who have Knowledge of an Aboriginal Language, by Age Group, based on 2006 Data.

Source: Tennant (2013) based on data from Statistics Canada (2006)

The results of this census data shows that, of those living on reserve, just over 50% were able to speak using an Aboriginal language; for First Nations living off reserve, the number dropped to just over 10% of the population. Of the Métis population 4% were able to speak an Aboriginal language. Of the Inuit population, which was surveyed based on the retention of mother tongue speakers, resulted in 53% percent of the population speaking an Aboriginal language. The Inuit had the highest number of young people who could speak an Aboriginal language.

Frideres and Gadacz (2008) stated, "Identity for Aboriginal people [was] at a crossroads" (p. 27). They further stated, "Our identity reflects the image we believe others have of us" (p. 26). A respondent to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples study conducted by Berry (1999) stated that they had "adjusted to the European way of doing things" in terms of how to work for non-Aboriginal people, but missed being able to practice ceremonies (p. 16). This representation of the respondent wanting to be able to return home to practice traditions illustrates that even in an urban area, for some there is always a connection, regardless of the shifts in identities that may take place over time. For others, such as those who have grown up in urban areas, that attachment to the land, and to culture, are not always mentioned or acknowledged.

Loss of place attachment. Through shifts in identity and losses of culture, some Canadian Aboriginal people both consciously and unconsciously sever ties with their places of origin and in some cases, lose attachment to that place altogether. As Norris and Clatworthy (2011) stated, "In urban areas where Aboriginal populations are long-established, generations of urban residents are more likely to have developed their own urban institutional structures and completeness" (p. 71), meaning that they develop a new identity and adapt to mainstream Canadian cultures. This act has the potential to impact the ties that they have with Aboriginal

people in their home communities, and also reduces the chance of Aboriginal people migrating back to home communities (Norris & Clotworthy, 2011).

Wab Kinew, Director for Indigenous inclusion at the University of Winnipeg, shared a similar view to Norris and Clatworthy (2011). Kinew (2012), stated that Aboriginal people who lived in urban-like areas for several generations with little contact with their culture, tend to have children who are unaware of Aboriginal traditions and how colonization affects their everyday lives (*8th Fire*, episode 1). Furthermore, Peters (n.d.) stated, "Fewer First Nations and Métis participants in urban areas [feel] a strong sense of belonging to their Native group than reserve residents felt to their First Nation," which represents the ever-growing disconnect occurring in urban areas (p. 25).

Interestingly, there are links between the sense of connection felt by Aboriginal people in Canada and other ethnic groups, as well as other urban residents. As Peters (n.d.) explained:

> The results show that while attachment to family is high across all groups, First Nations and Métis participants generally felt less attachment to Canada and to their home provinces than did participants in the general population. . . . while movement from rural to urban locations may reflect or cause a decrease in sense of belonging to a cultural group of origin, there is not much difference between First Nations and Métis people and other urban residents (p. 25).

That being said, the issue of losing that attachment to place may be part of the reason that Aboriginal cultures and identities have changed so greatly over time. As presented previously, the land has been where Aboriginal culture, identity, and tradition emerged. For many, the lack of green space provided in many urban centres causes a sense of disconnect between them and an

Aboriginal identity. For others, the significant differences in populace and landscape have caused them to yearn for their traditional communities. This movement back and forth, to and from Aboriginal communities and urban centres is referred to by many scholars in the field of Aboriginal studies, and especially Aboriginal Geography, as *churn*.

The Churning Momentum

Just as in rural and isolated communities, some people who live in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities leave. Some Aboriginal people exit their communities, integrate successfully into urban areas and maintain their cultures and more traditional identities. Others, however, are not comfortable in urban settings and move back home to their Aboriginal communities. Some choose to migrate back and forth from rural to urban settings, in hopes of adjusting to mainstream society and returning home to the comfort of their Aboriginal communities. This process, more recently known among geographers as *churn*, is "the great unwritten chapter in the history of migration" (King, 2000, p. 7), and makes it increasingly difficult for Aboriginal people to find a place where they feel they belong.

Churn has been "equated to unstable communities, which were considered a challenge for community development" (Legarcy as cited in Cashen, 2004, p. 2). Unfortunately, as Cashen (2004) identified, "churn itself has not received much sociological attention," despite its relationship to geographic migration, mobility, population growth, and the amount that they have been studied (p. 3). Furthermore, churn has been described as a threat to communities, especially those where majority populations are located, because the process of churn erodes "social infrastructures necessary for sustaining a healthy community" (Edelen, 2004, p. 5).

Scholars have noted that there has been a considerable amount of migration from cities to Aboriginal communities, as well as from Aboriginal communities to urban areas (Cardinal, 2006;

Clatworthy, 1996; Martin & Belanger, 2006; Norris, Beavon, Guimond, & Cooke, 2004; Peters, 2003; 2005; 2009) for well over a decade. In a study conducted by Cooke and Belanger (2006) which involved urban Aboriginal people, when asked "What do you think are the biggest problems that people who move to the city are faced with once they get there?" participants explained that there was "No sense of community" and stipulated that the lack of community-feel in urban areas is the reason that a lot of people choose to return home. In response to this, Aboriginal respondents also explained that when they lived on-reserve, they felt a sense of support. Cooke and Belanger (2006) added that along with community support, "The decision to move either to the city or back to a reserve community is clearly influenced by the presence of personal relationships" (p. 153). More often than not, ties are cut between Aboriginal people and their families when Aboriginal people migrate to the city.

In recent years, as the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study conducted by the Environics Institute (2010) suggested, more Aboriginal people have chosen to migrate to, and remain in, urban areas. The study highlights that, despite the deep sense of connection and attachment that many urban Aboriginal peoples have with their communities of origin, the majority consider their current city as their home. Seven out of ten participants stated that home was their current urban place of residence. Newhouse (2011) spoke about his experiences in an urban setting. He explained that he met "ex-reserves, so to speak, longing to return to the reserve" (p. 23). These individuals depict their communities as "a place where they felt comfortable, could live among family, where they would be accepted, [and] would not always feel different or out of place" (p. 23). That sense of community and belonging cause some to forfeit better paying jobs and other opportunities, because it is familiar and comfortable. For some, as Newhouse further indicated, it is "unfair to call them urbanites," because the city was not a place that many called home (p.

23). Instead, the urban was a stopping place, and home would always be known as on reserve or in a rural community where they were born and had family ties. Having lived in an urban setting, however, can cause issues between Aboriginal individuals and their communities, which is where identity crises may evolve. In order for Aboriginal people to foster a sense of culture and identity within the city, Berry (1999) argued "since this process [of Aboriginal urbanization] has resulted from interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, the key to re-establishing a sense of well-being and a secure cultural identity resides in restructuring the relationships between these two communities" (p. 9), which also refers to the experiences that Aboriginal people have in those urban spaces.

As Steckley (2012) stated, a growing number of Aboriginal people now work and live in towns and cities. However, Peters (2005) noted "it seems clear that a significant portion of churn occurs because reserve and rural areas of origin are still important to many urban Aboriginal migrants" (p. 346). As data from the Assembly of First Nations (2011) survey indicated, over 75% of participants strongly agreed that maintaining a connection to their home community was important to them. By maintaining this connection, their identity and culture remained intact, and they were more likely to pass on their traditional knowledge to younger generations of Aboriginal people.

Conclusion to the Section

Although urban areas do offer increased opportunities, moving to such a location does not necessarily lead to one's ability to successfully access them, nor is migrating to such an area easy to do for those who are originally from rural, isolated majority settings. Migrating to a larger, more densely and diversely populated setting can lead to various shifts and losses for

Aboriginal people, including a shift in identity, loss of culture, and a loss in place attachment. For some, urban locations are not ideal settings, and they choose to migrate back to their original location.

In the following and final section of this thematic findings chapter, I present the data pertaining to my final research question, which seeks to analyze the geographic similarities of Aboriginal people and islanders, as well as Aboriginal communities and islands. In doing so, I relate the data that has been presented thus far in this chapter to what scholars have written in regards to islands and islanders around the world in an attempt to draw parallels between the two types of peoples and communities.

Research Question #4: The Parallels Between Islanders and Aboriginal people

Through my Master of Arts (Island Studies) courses, it became apparent to me that some small islands and Aboriginal communities in Canada seemed to share many geographic similarities. These commonalities stem from physical geographical characteristics, such as smallness, exclusivity, and isolation, as well as characteristics stemming from human geography, such as unique, special cultures and identities. Through further research, certain geographic settings, features, and characteristics stemming from those issues began to emerge as common themes in the literature of small islands, as well as the literature pertaining to Aboriginal peoples in Canada. In this final section, I present those parallels using spatial metaphors and provide data regarding small islands and Aboriginal communities as examples which illustrate my metaphors.

Metaphors in Island Studies

In discussing metaphors as they emerge from nissology, Ronström (2012) claimed, "The island is indeed a common metaphorical genre" (p. 158). Gillis (2004) argued that within western culture, we not only think about islands, but we also think with them (p. 8). He believed that the island is a master metaphor, capable of representing a multitude of things. In his own work, Baldacchino (2005) has shared similar views, describing islands as "objects of representation" (p. 247). Similarly, Dodds and Royle (2003) found, "The metaphorical meanings and analogies attached to islands have transformed modern understandings of human societies" (p. 487). I agree with the statement made by Dodds and Royle and provide examples of ways to understand Aboriginal communities as islands through an analysis of my thematic findings.

My final research question, *What parallels can be drawn between island living and living in an isolated Aboriginal community?,* is answered differently than the previous research questions. To address this research question, I employ spatial metaphors to represent the parallels between islands, islanders, Aboriginal communities, and Aboriginal people are as follows: (a) small, remote Aboriginal communities in Canada metaphorically viewed as small Islands, (b) rural areas of Canada metaphorically viewed as the sea that binds together isolated areas with those areas of perceived increased opportunities, and, (c) urban or urban-like areas of Canada metaphorically viewed as mainland areas where increased opportunities are said to be available.

In the first subsection of this section, I discuss geographic similarities, such as isolation, insularity, and smallness as positive geographical, community aspects. In doing so, I also discuss culture and identity, and how those two characteristics develop based on what

geographers refer to as place. To conclude this section, I discuss the negative aspects of isolation, insularity, and smallness. Positive and negative characteristics, such as isolation, insularity, and smallness, can lead to individuals wanting to leave their home communities. This is referred to as out-migration. In the second section to this chapter, I discuss out-migration in small islands and small Aboriginal communities in Canada, and the reasons why individuals choose to migrate. I conclude this section with where individuals choose to migrate, and move into the final section of this chapter. In this final section, I discuss what happens to the individuals who choose to migrate from the two types of communities in terms of their identity, as well as their attachment to their home communities.

Small, Remote Aboriginal Communities in Canada as Small Islands

In metaphorically describing *Aboriginal communities as a type of small island*, three main themes emerged from my research: (a) typical geographies of Aboriginal communities and islands documented as being *bound, finite, insular, isolated,* and *peripheral*; (b) *small, bound, finite, insular, isolated,* areas *can be viewed as positive aspects of small islands and small, remote Aboriginal communities within Canada*; and, (c) *negative characteristics of living in a small, bound, insular, isolated, island or remote Aboriginal community in Canada*. These positive and negative aspects of geographic locations have the potential to influence certain characteristics of islanders and Aboriginal people in Canada.

Geographic similarities of Aboriginal communities in Canada and small islands. In his book "A Geography of Islands," Stephen Royle (2001) acknowledged, "In island nations the urban/rural; core/periphery distinctions might be expressed in relationships between the dominant islands and the off-islands" (p. 47). In this section, I relate various other geographic features of rural, isolated Aboriginal communities to those of small islands. The idea that

something is bound, finite, insular, isolated, or peripheral is based on finite geographical landscapes. Small islands and Aboriginal communities in Canada are two spaces that represent such geographic landscapes, and the research shows that geographically there are a multitude of similarities stemming from island and Aboriginal geographies, which emerged centuries ago when small islands and Canada began to be colonized. Aboriginal people in Canada, the original inhabitants of the country, were displaced by colonizers and bound to certain lands with specific policies by treaties and government documents. According to Hau'ofa (1993), an island scholar whose work has focused heavily on Pacific Islands, "In Oceania, derogatory and belittling views of indigenous cultures are traceable to the early years of interactions with Europeans" (p. 148). He documented that a number of Pacific societies still separate their history into two parts: "the era of darkness associated with savagery and barbarism; and the era of light and civilization ushered in by Christianity" (p. 149). Similarly, Aboriginal histories are divided into pre and post contact with Europeans and, more specifically, are divided into pre and post residential school establishment.

Due to their small sizes, Aboriginal communities in Canada, as well as islands, have been seemingly forgotten about by others and are often viewed as being insignificant. The world figure below illustrates how easy it is to forget about the small islands that occupy the earth's system. Baldacchino (2006) titled his book to imply that we live in "a world of islands." Figure 14 supports Baldacchino's point. Various countries resemble what one typically perceives to be an island; a landmass surrounded by water. Also, in this graphic, it should be noted that many of the islands of the world are not visible, due to their small size. In some cases, depending on the scale of the map, islands have been left out of maps entirely.

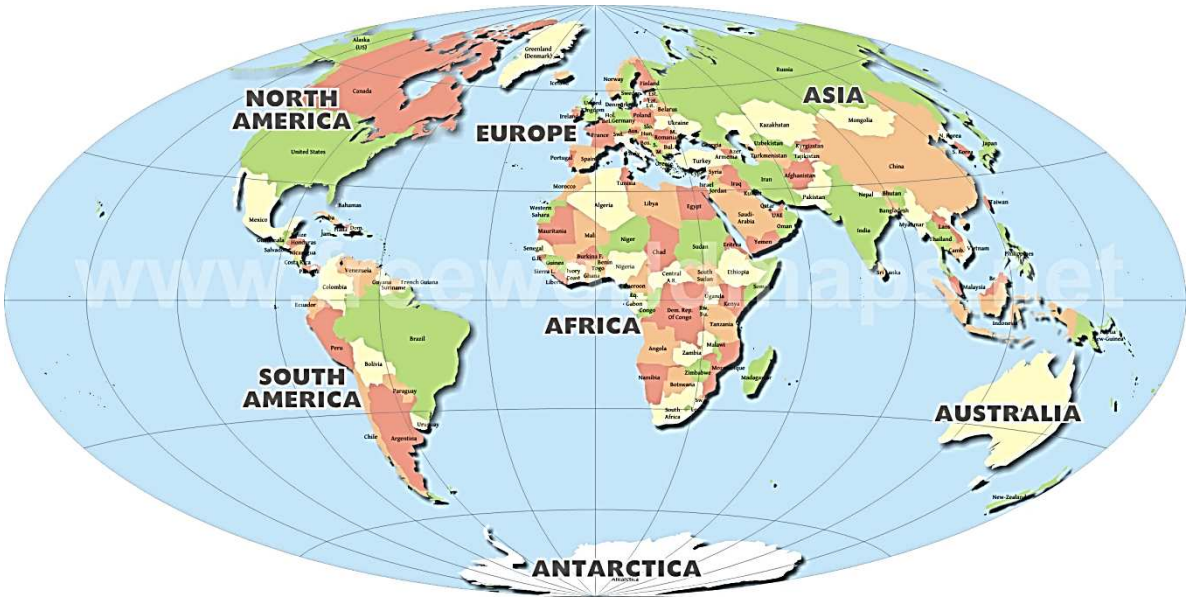

Figure 14. World Map

Source: Free World Maps (n.d.)

Baldacchino (2006) also noted "small, remote and insular also suggest peripherally, being on the edge, being out of sight and also out of mind" (p. 6). Their isolation tends to make them peripheral (Royle, 2001). As Royle (2001) explained, they are "usually far in absolute and social terms from the major central places, such as the national capitals" (p. 45). Royle, as well as many other nissologists, refer to these geographic limitations of islands as *islandness*, which Royle defined as "constraints that are imposed upon small islands by virtue of their insularity," which are "quintessentially geographical" (p. 42). According to Conkling (2007), this point "means that you live a life closer to nature than most mainlanders do. The rhythms of tides, winds, and storms determine what you will do and what you will not do" (p. 199).

That being said, as Knapp (2008) suggested, "The impact of insularity can be felt to some degree in all natural habitats, in a variety of cultural situations" (p. 22). The explanations

provided which detail the physical geography of many islands can also be used to describe the geography of Aboriginal communities in Canada and the way in which many are viewed by a large population of Canadians. Coincidentally, this geographic pattern of Aboriginal communities has been referred to as *Aboriginality* among scholars studying Aboriginal issues in Canada (Frideres & Gadacz, 2011). As Silver (2003) explained, "[Aboriginal people] were . . . pushed onto reserves and thus isolated from the dominant culture and institutions of Canada . . ." (p. 19). This process imposes constraints for Aboriginal people similar to what Royle was quoted as saying in the previous paragraph regarding islandess.

As Royle (2001) noted, "Usually being small scale is simply and obviously a problem" (p. 42), not only for islands, but for many other geographic locations as well. Conversely, for many islanders, Aboriginal people, and scholars who have studied those people and their communities including myself, those geographies that seem constricting to some provide unique preservations of culture, traditions, and identities. Islanders, like Aboriginal people, "are constantly reminded that their way of life and their identity have much to do with insularity and isolation" (Connell & King as cited in Baldacchino, 2003, p. 274).

Positive aspects of the locations of Aboriginal communities in Canada and islands. Positive aspects of landmasses that are geographically bound, isolated, and located on the periphery, as they relate to small islands and small Aboriginal communities include (as the research pertaining to research question two showed) the preservation of unique cultures and the emergence and preservation of unique identities. Both of these points are based on the geographic concept of place attachment. Royle (2006) suggested that geographic features, such as "remoteness, smallness (absolute and/or relative), isolation, peripherality, etc.–can also affect, singly or together, certain mainland areas" (p. 1). He noted that although they can affect

mainland areas, such geographic features "are more notable in their effect on the bounded landmasses," such as islands (p. 1). Phillip Vannini, a scholar who has studied selected island topics, specifically as they relate to cultures, suggested, "Small islanders, similarly to other rural residents, find that small islands' sensescapes also feel remarkably different from cities'[29] (2011, p. 256). This statement shows the unique place attachment that some small islanders and rural residents, such as Aboriginal people, may feel in their communities. This place attachment is part of what helps to create unique individual identities. The idea that identities emerge from small, insular places, such as islands, is discussed as a positive attribute of island geography in the following subsection.

Identity and culture as they emerge from small, insular spaces. Royle (1989) has suggested that islands, similar to the isolation associated with rural areas, have played an important part in human culture. Similarly, Connell (2006) wrote, "A view of insularity as a contingent, malleable and even elusive concept which can be regarded productively in terms of the construction of social identity and status" (p. 243). Weale (as cited in Vannini, 2011) wrote "when you live here [in Prince Edward Island] for long, you take the island inside, deep inside. You become an Islander, which is to say a creature of the Island. Islandness becomes a part of your being, a part as deep as marrow, and as natural and unselfconscious as breathing" (p. 257). Vannini (2011) also explained that there are often commonalities, such as a sense of place that many small island residents and residents of rural places share. He documented that a strong sense of community is embodied among rural residents, small islanders, and also, those living on the Gulf Islands, which is where his work has mainly focused. This community characteristic

[29] The term sensescape refers to human interactions within physical environments.

expressed by residents in the places studied by Vannini, is part of what helps to define a specific identity among islanders and Aboriginal people.

In 1960, Kuznets identified a major advantage of small countries which, despite rapid globalization in the intervening time, is still particularly relevant. He explained that "to use [their] stronger sense of community, the closer coherence of the population, the greater elasticity of social institutions, to overcome the disadvantages of small size" (p. 31) was a unique and useful process. Similar to what has been written regarding small Aboriginal communities in Canada, Kuznets further indicated:

> In many small states there exists a strong feeling of community and solidarity, a product of a long-shared historical past, and that in these states social decisions, necessary for the adjustment to the potentials of economic growth, may be far easier to reach than elsewhere (p. 29).

This idea of tight-knit communities is a theme in itself, which is mentioned often by nissologists as a positive aspect of smallness. Standing together as a community for the benefit of all occupants is a unique practice that is much more difficult to find in larger, more diversely populated regions. Speaking to the isolated, small islands located in the Pacific Ocean, Mead (1973) wrote that it was still possible to find untouched societies in our world. She further explained that those special, isolated, small islands can provide historical evidence on the malleability of human interaction and nature. Although this evidence is becoming increasingly more difficult to find, it does seem as though those communities that continue to remain more traditional in nature are those places which are located in the most isolated parts of the world.

Place attachment. The concept of *place*, in these types of geographically isolated, bound, finite areas helps to explain who the residents are and how they maintain unique cultures and identities, which are often lost when they are in minority settings. Part of the reason that unique cultural characteristics are able to be maintained in these isolated geographic settings is due to the limited contact that residents have with mainstream societies (Frideres, 2011; Tanner, 1998). The limited connection to others, whether they are mainlanders or non-Aboriginal people, as well as limited exposure to various technologies and belief systems, allows for islanders and Aboriginal people to maintain their own traditional knowledge, languages, and belief systems (Slavik as cited in Frideres, 2011). That being said, not having access to various goods, services, and ways of life can also impede the lives of islanders and Aboriginal people.

Baldacchino (2005) believed that islandness, the isolation, closeness to nature, and uniqueness of small communities seems to replace or take on the attributes of ethnicity. This unique sense of place is also seen in Aboriginal communities and contributes to individuals becoming increasingly attached to those special places. Accordingly, Vannini (2011) wrote that British Colombia islanders:

> . . . routinely describe their sensescapes as quiet, placid, fraught with the smells, sounds, and sights of nature rather than human (read: industrial) presence. Given the extremely low population densities and limited development on the BC Coast, people's discourses about their sensescapes are not objectively unfounded. Human geographers have found similar qualities about other islands of course. (p. 256–257)

The descriptive words used by islanders located on small islands in British Colombia represent the special bond between the people and their land as well as island communities, exemplifying their unique attachment and relationship with those places. This attachment to islands is also

discussed by Spickard (2002). He referenced Tupou, who speaks of Tonga in lyrics, as an almost mystical place where her identity was established:

When I speak of Tonga,
I speak of Me.
A person made up of multiple identities
Through my veins flow the blood of various cultures
But I only identify myself as one from Tonga.
There, my heart will always stay true,
For Tonga is my home;
My island and My taboo. (p. 17)

In this instance, not only has the islander spoken of home and illustrated her attachment to place, but she speaks to various cultures present in Tonga and also to her own identity.

The boundness, isolation, and peripheral locations of many small islands, as well as small Aboriginal communities, results in unique cultures and identities to be preserved and in some cases, the preservation of unique flora and fauna (Quamenn, 1996). That being said, these geographic features sometimes have negative characteristics for Aboriginal populations. The same can be said of those living on small islands, and the data pertaining to the negative aspects associated with islandness is presented below.

Negative aspects associated with living in Aboriginal communities and on small islands. Despite the many positive aspects of smallness, isolation, and boundedness, these geographically finite characteristics of Aboriginal communities and small islands can also pose problems for some residents. The words small, isolated, bound, and finite, often carry negative connotations, and, in some cases, these aspects in relation to islandness and Aboriginality, do

lead to negative consequences for Aboriginal people and, as this section demonstrates for islanders as well. In many instances, residents of small, remote regions have limited access to educational, economic, and social opportunities, as well as health care options. Individuals often have to leave their island or Aboriginal community to access certain health services, gain an education, access employment opportunities (Corbett, 2007; Frideres & Gadacz, 2011; Howard & Proulx, 2011), and/or obtain certain groceries (Statistics Canada, 2013). For some people there comes a point for many people, especially younger generations who live in remote Aboriginal communities, or people who live on small islands, to be closer to goods, services, and opportunities as important aspects of their quality of life (Corbett, 2007). For that reason, many residents choose to migrate from their home locations.

As Royle (2001) explained, "Despite such wide distribution and variations, islands everywhere are subject to the impact of a common range of constraints imposed because of their very insularity" (p. 1). The small size of many islands puts some inhabitants in danger of becoming confined to mental and/or physical reservations (Hau'ofa, 1993). Also, their small, remote, insular geographic features, as Baldacchino (2006) stated "suggest peripherally, being on the edge, being out of sight and also out of mind" (p. 6), similar to that of some Aboriginal people located in Aboriginal communities in Canada. For some islanders, once established on an island, adaptation and survival become a focus of everyday life (Knapp, 2008), as is the case for some Aboriginal people, who live in communities where resources and opportunities are often scarce (Silver, 2006).

One of the main problems that both residents of small islands and people living in isolated Aboriginal communities in Canada face is the lack of access to various services (Royle, 2001). Due to their scale, small island societies can be confining and restrictive, which can

cause younger generations to seek adventure elsewhere (Royle, 2001). The issues surrounding the lack of opportunities and the perceived need to migrate from small islands to mainland areas that offer increased opportunities are presented in the following section

Rural Areas of Canada as the Sea

The second metaphor promotes the idea that *rural areas of Canada act as the sea, which binds isolated areas with those of perceived increased opportunities*. Rural areas of Canada, as well as the waters surrounding islands, are the spaces that individuals must travel across should they choose to migrate away from their home communities. Maxwell (2012) mentioned, "The seas are known (as are the lands) in and through processes of embodiment; they are felt, attuned to, personified, negotiated with and incorporated, as much as they are chartered, quantified and overcome" (p. 22). This process of leaving a community in search of another is known as *outmigration* or migration. In this segment I focus on migration as a method of enhancing the lives of islanders and Aboriginal people by gaining access to areas perceived to offer increased opportunities.

Migration. To leave most islands, one must typically travel either by boat or plane in order to cross the vast seas that surround them.[30] In isolated Aboriginal communities Aboriginal people must do the same thing, travelling long distances through sparsely populated, rural expanses. Aboriginal people, due to various circumstances, are often forced to migrate to urban areas, because those locations generally have increased social, economic, and educational opportunities. Similarly, those individuals who live on small islands tend to seek the same

[30] This is not true of all islands. Some, such as Prince Edward Island, have bridges or causeways connecting them to the mainland, which makes them less isolated than those islands that have to be accessed by boat or plane.

opportunities and adventure by travelling to the mainland or landmasses adjacent to their home islands and often in larger urban areas on those mainlands.

Barcus and Brunn (2010) noted that migration is associated with a complex interplay of individual perceptions, desires, and needs. Migration is linked to one's financial and legal ability to move and real or perceived opportunities located in another destination. As Royle (2001) stated, a high amount of out-migration causes difficulties sustaining a society. He also cautioned that "many small islands have gone on to lose their population entirely once the downward spiral of emigration has begun" (p. 87). This description can sometimes be seen in coastal communities and island communities as well as in Aboriginal communities and other isolated areas of the world. Unfortunately, for isolated, finite geographic locations, as Connell and King (1999) wrote, "because of insularity and geographical constraints, livelihood mobility has become an insular way of life, an inseparable dimension attached to boundedness and limited land area" (p. 80). This movement, whether done voluntarily or forcibly, can affect islands, Aboriginal communities and their inhabitants in many ways, depending upon where individuals choose to migrate, and whether they decide to return.

As Connell and King wrote (1992), isolation and insularity, although seen as being a positive geographic attribute for many islands, also coincides with migration and mobility. As with many Aboriginal people, increased migration to areas that were more densely and diversely populated was sought by many islanders in the 1970s and 1980s, because their homeland "environments were deteriorating or were threatened" and there was little that could be done about it (Hau'ofa, 1993, p. 150). Residents of small islands began to evacuate their communities seeking increased opportunities in areas with increased technology and infrastructure (Hau'ofa, 1993). Connell and King (1999) noted that the insularity as well as other geographic constraints

of islands led to livelihood mobility becoming an insular way of life, attached to boundedness and finite parcels of land.

Connell (2006) offered that the process of migrating ". . . is primarily a response to real and perceived inequalities in socioeconomic opportunities, within and between states." (p. 457). Furthermore, social influences are important, because they affect access to education and health services and, are therein often a function of economic issues. Royle (2006) also explained that individuals migrate "when they perceive some betterment in social and/or economic circumstances to be gained from choosing to move" (p. 87). As with many Aboriginal families, islanders typically migrate to provide their children with increased educational and employment opportunities, because larger landmasses that are more densely populated maintain a powerful attraction while offering a sense of future, which validates migration for many islanders.

As Royle (2006) explained, "It is not being on an island per se that leads to migration; people leave because of the circumstances they face and given the constraints imposed by insularity, adverse circumstances frequently arise in the small island situation" (p. 87). However, as Connell (2006) noted, islands are perpetually characterized by migration. The circumstances stemming from various geographic features cause both islanders and Aboriginal people to migrate from their home communities to areas that offer increased goods and services. The consequences of migrating from an island to a mainland area, or location which offers increased opportunities are presented in this final section.

Urban Areas of Canada as Mainlands

The final section of my Thematic Findings chapter is based on the spatial metaphor that *urban areas act as mainland areas, where increased opportunities are said to be available*. In

this section of my thesis, I identify what happens to someone from a small island or a small Aboriginal community who migrates to a geographic area that is larger and more diverse in population than their home community. In some cases, as was presented in an earlier section regarding Aboriginal integration to urban areas, individuals are able to migrate successfully into a setting where they are considered to be part of a minority, but there are many instances where this migration and emersion into a diversely populated setting can be a negative experience. In either case, migration from small, peripheral locations to larger, more diversely populated areas, impacts individuals in many ways.

Minority in a majority populace. As the data pertaining to the movement of Aboriginal people from rural, isolated communities in Canada to urban areas suggested, there is a struggle when moving from places of origin to places of perceived increased opportunity, largely because those migrating become a minority in a majority populace. Many experience discrimination, and others feel a sense of social isolation in such settings. In turn, those individuals who choose to migrate from small islands to areas of perceived increased opportunities face similar challenges.

Similar to the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada, Hau'ofa (1993) described the relationship between mainlanders and islanders in the case of Polynesia and Micronesia stating that, when individuals from continents see a Polynesian or Micronesian island, by default, they view it as small or tiny. Their perception is based on the extent of the land surfaces they can see and does not include any of the positive aspects of human geography that stem from such locations. On larger islands and on mainlands, the cultures and identities of small islanders are contested, and their ability to assimilate into the majority populace poses challenges, because it is difficult to maintain unique island cultures.

Shifts and losses. Being a minority in a majority populace, as stated in the previous research presented regarding Aboriginal people in Canada, is difficult for many and often leads to shifts and losses in identity, culture, and attachment to places of origin. As some scholars suggested, migration embodies what it means to be an islander (Guan & McElroy, 2012; Royle, 2001). According to Connell (2006), the inclination to migrate became entrenched early in Pacific islanders. The United Nations (n.d.) published a fact sheet regarding the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Islands and their tendency to migrate to urban areas. This research showed that in recent years, migration to urban areas, both voluntarily and involuntarily, has increased significantly. In the United Nations (n.d.) document "Indigenous Peoples Indigenous Voices" Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration Fact Sheet showed that family separations caused by the amount of Indigenous migration among Pacific islanders has psychological effects on many individuals, because it is increasingly difficult for families to preserve relationships when family members migrate long distances to new places.

Similarly, Sallabank (2011) found that the Norman speakers who originally inhabited the Channel Islands have also been affected by the migration of residents to larger areas. In the same way that Aboriginal people signed treaties the Channel Islands ". . . swore allegiance to the British Crown in return for privileges and protection" (Sallabank, 2011, p. 20). Aboriginal scholars have discussed languages as "symbols of ethnic, regional or national identity" (Sallabank, 2011, p. 21). At the present time, although each island has, or historically was known to have its own Norman language, "the majority of people in the Channel Islands speak English as their first (and in many cases their only) language" (Sallabank, 2011, p. 21). The languages that were once preserved by these geographic locations were influenced by

colonization, and as islanders move from islands, such as the Normans of the Channel Islands, their Indigenous languages weaken and become lost.

In speaking of identity and return migration in Tonga, Maron and Connell (2008) wrote "Migrant identities are constantly challenged and contested by the migration process, while 'the identity of person and place is always continuously being produced" (p. 168). Tongans develop, as many scholars have stated, *multiple identities* (Castles & Miller, 1998), as well as unique *bi* or *transcultural* elements that allow individuals to maintain ties with their places of origin and host societies (Castles & Miller, 1998; Maron & Connell, 2008). As is the case with Aboriginal people who migrate to areas that are more urban, some of those who identify as Tongan when situated overseas embrace their Tongan identities while others do not have an opportunity to embrace them in order to succeed in a Westernized society (Maron & Connell, 2008).

In describing Tongan life overseas, a participant in Maron and Connell's (2008) research stated that "Overseas is totally different . . . sometimes very fast" (p. 179). Maron and Connell (2008) stated that the experiences that islanders have overseas often lead to the "juggling of multiple identities" (p. 182). Connell (2006) noted in another study that for islanders who choose to stay overseas to have children, there is an added degree of loss due to the limited contact that they have with their home societies. This forfeiture happens because they often lose critical linguistic, as well as other social skills. Over a period of time, this process may lead to a loss in identification as a member of the community for which they once had ties.

Shifts in identity are not necessarily a bad thing. As Knapp (2008) stated, "Peoples identities are established in part by differentiating themselves from others, in part by maintaining symbolic boundaries" (p. 388). Islanders, as Knapp (2008) noted, intentionally modify, develop, and change their world as well as their identities through interactions with other

islanders and non-islanders. Extreme shifts in identity can result in a loss of culture over time and, for some, a loss of attachment to home communities. As with Aboriginal people, some islanders attempt to move back home after having experienced life in a more densely, diversely populated area. Some travel back and forth using various modes of transportation, searching for a place where they belong.

Churn. Connell (2006) mentioned that, unlike Aboriginal migration and the churning momentum that scholars have written of, throughout the past quarter of a century, there has not been a substantial return of islanders to most islands and island states, despite the notion that many islanders want to return to their homeland to live. There is some movement back and forth of people and goods. When return migration does occur in small island societies, it slowly changes islands, islanders, as well as their cultures and traditions, especially in islands that are small. Along with this, new perceptions of identity begin to emerge (Connell & King, 1999; Maron & Connell, 2008).

One respondent to Maron and Connell's (2008) research who now lives in Tonga, but had lived overseas, commented that

> Tonga is the best place in my life. My daughter in New Zealand . . . she wants me to move there with her, but I'm getting old. I like to stay here planting yams. I'm fed up with going overseas. I don't want to go back. I feel like I want to stay home and enjoy my life. No money, no life at all overseas. Tonga–no money, you can have a life. (p. 178)

Such as this participant, for other Tongans who do return home, nearly half return for family reasons and/or, because they want to rediscover their Tongan identity and culture (Maron & Connell, 2008). Another respondent felt very similar, stating:

> It's good for me to work and live here [in Tonga] because when I go to the plantation it's good exercise for me . . . I'm very happy here. In the [United] States, you have to pay bills for everything . . . you hardly sleep at night thinking of all the bills you have to pay. In Tonga, I have my own plantation and raise my own livestock. Time in the [United] States runs your life . . . you have to be on time . . . not like here [in Tonga]. (p. 178)

A traditional lifestyle, such as that which is offered to those who live in Aboriginal communities or on small islands, is better suited to some people, especially those individuals seeking to foster their identity and traditional roots. As these two statements show, life in Tonga is based on primary activities and the slower-paced, tighter-knit community aspects of Tongan life that these two respondents prefered. Both respondents, however, represent the older generation of Tongans, and, as the first statement suggests, younger migrants are more likely to remain in larger urban places so that they can continue to access various opportunities and services.

Not all people who experience life on the mainland find it to be a pleasant experience. Islanders who are successful, as the quotation below provided by Maron and Connell (2008) represents, prefer that their children, as some Aboriginal families in Canada have attempted, know very little of their Tongan culture. They stated that one family of participants who migrated to Australia ". . . tried to speak as much English as possible, for [the sake of] the kids" (p. 177). Doing so was perceived to assist children with their integration into the society overseas. As was presented in the data pertaining to Aboriginal people attempting to integrate into mainstream, urban areas, speaking English within the home was believed to improve success in another culture.

Conclusion to the Chapter

In this chapter I presented the data that responded to my four research questions. In doing so, I have provided the themes that emerged from my research, which included: (a) bounded and finite spaces, (b) isolation and insularity, (c) the location of peripheral populations, (d) preservation of culture and identity, (e) place attachment, (f) ethnic homogeneity, (g) migration for increased opportunities, (h) minority in a majority populace: shifts and losses, which I divided into two sub-categories; shifts in identity/loss of culture, and loss of place attachment, (i) the churning momentum. The final themes were presented using spatial metaphors and included: (a) small, remote Aboriginal communities in Canada as small islands, (b) rural areas of Canada as the sea which binds together isolated areas with those of perceived increased opportunities, and finally, (c) urban areas of Canada, or those that are perceived to be more urban in nature, as mainlands where increased opportunities are said to be available.

In the following chapter, I discuss the thematic findings of my research. Along with this, I respond to the research questions that were posed in Chapter 1 and conclude by discussing what was discovered by undertaking this research. This concluding chapter includes a presentation of the significance of my research findings, a discussion regarding the limitations of my study, the implications of the limitations within my study, and a discussion of the gaps that I have located which require further research. Lastly, I conclude by reflecting on the research presented, and how it has affected my own views, perspectives, and experiences as a researcher.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

Newton once said "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants" (cited in Smith, 2000). In saying this, Newton was referring to the many contributors to knowledge that came before him. Similarly, this point should be said about my own research. Had it not been for those who came before me, this research would not have been possible, especially when one takes into consideration the qualitative method that I chose to employ in this research.

The main undertaking of this research was to uncover the potential geographic similarities that islanders and Aboriginal people share. These commonalities, which are reviewed in the discussion section of this chapter involved aspects of physical geography and human geography, as well as the discovery that migration, for both peoples, represents a way of life. That being said, as Kincaid (1988) explained:

> For the people in a small place, every event is a domestic event ... eventually they absorb the event and it becomes a part of them, a part of who and what they really are, and they are complete in that way until another event comes along and the process begins again ...To the people in a small place, the division of Time into the Past, the Present and the Future does not exist. An event that occurred one hundred years ago might be as vivid to them as if it were happening at this very moment. (pp. 52–54)

Whether individuals choose to remain in their places of origin or migrate to larger areas with more opportunities, I believe that the small spaces that islanders and Aboriginal people turn into

places should always remain a part of who they are, despite the complex, multi-layered identities that some develop in other areas.

Discussion

The purpose of my research has been *to describe the geographic distribution of Aboriginal people who live in remote, isolated Aboriginal communities in Canada in terms of how geographic settings and features, particularly those that are characteristic of island dwellers, are related to and can impact aspects of culture and identity*. I researched this topic by attempting to respond to four research questions,

1) How do certain geographic settings and features, particularly as they pertain to small islands, relate to Aboriginal people who live in remote Aboriginal communities?;

2) How does the isolation that some Aboriginal people experience living in remote Aboriginal communities influence the culture and identity of those people living in those locations?;

3) How do mobility and the migration of Aboriginal people away from isolated Aboriginal communities and into non-Aboriginal communities that are more urban in nature influence their sense of culture and identity?; and,

4) What parallels can be drawn between island living and living in an isolated Aboriginal community?

Being a non-Aboriginal student in the Master of Arts in Island Studies program, whose undergraduate degree focused on Geography, Environmental Studies, and Aboriginal issues, it was my belief that there were many similarities between the geographic settings and features of small islands and small, isolated Aboriginal communities in Canada. Having been particularly

interested in aspects of human geography, such as place, culture, and identity, I chose to conduct qualitative research using the methods of research synthesis and document analysis to collect data in an effort to respond to my research questions. In doing so, I contributed knowledge to many disciplines, while conducting unique, interdisciplinary research.

Theoretical Considerations

Place attachment and mobility are often viewed as opposites, with either place attachment viewed as being more important to the individual due to its rooted connection to place and the physical environment, or mobility being more important because it can lead to increased opportunities and a variety of experiences. The roots/routes perspective (Gustafson, 2001), however, allows for place attachment and mobility to be seen as complementary, because the social interactions that take place in one or several geographic areas are all viewed as being important. As the data presented in chapter 4 showed, the outmigration of islanders and Aboriginal people from their places of origin can lead to various shifts and losses in culture and identity. As cultural theory and the roots/routes perspective suggests, the process of migrating is part of a larger, transformative process. As the world becomes increasingly globalized, mobility has become increasingly more common, and, due to this increase in mobility the importance of place in shaping culture and identity has increasingly been questioned (Gustafson, 2001). Routes, for some, are now valued as much, if not more, than roots. Migration and mobility are no longer viewed as being deviant. Instead, this movement to various places, and the impacts that they have on individual culture and identity, are viewed as being as valuable as attachment to one place. Individuals who have grown up in small communities that are considered to be more traditional are choosing to migrate in order to gain supplementary knowledge for themselves and for future generations of family members. In doing so, whether people migrate

to other small, rural areas, or larger, more urban-like areas, they gain new experiences, and some scholars (DeLougrey, 2007; Gustafson, 2001) would argue that they become more whole in their identities by doing so.

As Gustafson (2001) noted, instead of regarding mobility and migration as negative geographic processes, it is imperative that researchers realize the experiences that individuals have in various places shape their identities as much as remaining in one place. Gustafson (2001) stated "Social theorists have argued that social relationships as well as individual experiences, because of increasing mobility and the development of information and communication technologies, are becoming dissociated from place" (p. 669). That being said, as a human geographer, I recognize that although culture and identity do not emerge simply from roots, I maintain that the process individuals undergo in diversely populated settings can sometimes cause them to dismiss their traditional lifestyles and ways of life when speaking of Aboriginal people and islanders. This scenario was seen in the example of the Houseman family noted in chapter 4. Upon moving to an urban setting, Tyson Houseman's parents chose to bring their children up without knowledge of their ancestry. That being said, upon discovering his Aboriginal ancestry, Tyson, along with the rest of his family, began to celebrate their culture in their urban setting, and began to embrace their rooted Aboriginal identity while adding to it through routed experiences in various urban areas. Similarly, in the poem by Tupou that was presented in chapter 4, the writer was an islander who no longer lived on an island. She stated that her "heart will always stay true" to Tonga, a place that she specifically refers to as *home* within the poem. She also mentioned in the poem that she is a person who is made up of various identities, representing both roots and routes of the cultural perspective.

As the world becomes increasingly more global and migration and mobility are becoming increasing more common, I posit that culture islands, where isolated groups experience "an implicit connection between bounded space and culture" (DeLoughrey, 2007, p. 16), remain important to some people, whether they are islanders, Aboriginal people, or others who have experienced life in a small, seemingly bounded communities. As Gustafson (2001) stated mobility and cosmopolitanism are said to be the norm now, and local attachment to place has become regarded as a deficiency or deviation from this new norm. Despite this norm, many Aboriginal people who chose to leave their traditional communities are said to still maintain a connection with their traditional lands, because those lands continue to provide sanctuary (Newhouse, 2011). As Frideres and Gadacz (2008) stated, "The reserve/settlement still provides security and roots for many Aboriginal people" (p. 57), therefore, place attachment remains an important part of the lives of many Aboriginal people, and the land remains central to Aboriginal identity (Haluza-De-Lay, O'Reily, Cole, & Agyeman, 2009), despite the various other routes that they choose to take during their lifetimes.

Similarly, Weale (cited in Vannini, 2011) wrote that for those individuals who move to Prince Edward Island islandness becomes part of them. This statement can be interpreted to mean that for islanders or people who come from away and live on islands, place attachment is an active part of the island lifestyle. Mesch and Manor (as cited in Gustafson, 2001) stated that there have been instances where place attachment could also be seen in those who are mobile, once again representing the routed perspective.

As was the case with early geographers, I remain fascinated by islands, real, and metaphorical, that seem to represent "little geographical worlds" (King and Connell, 1999, p. 2) and as DeLoughrey (2007) inferred, just like the movement of the ocean, people are always

moving and will continue to do so until the end of time. Migration, after all, is an inevitable process. Regarding the post-war decades King and Connell (1999) stated:

> It [is] no longer possible to think of many islanders as living primarily on their home islands, but rather as cosmopolitans inhabiting diverse worlds and with identities constructed by their experiences of living in more than one geographical, cultural and socio-economic environment (p. 7).

Islander and Aboriginal identities are constantly shaped and reshaped by the activities of migrants. However, to say that migrants are rarely any less islanders or Aboriginal after migration is somewhat misleading. That is not to say that routes are any less important than roots or that they affect individuals differently. They both shape who a person becomes. Instead, as was the case with Berry (1999), those who migrate become disconnected from their Aboriginal or island heritage, may suffer from identity loss in diversely populated settings, while others sometimes are drawn away from who they were or where they came from. In saying this, I am not inferring that all Aboriginal people or islanders who leave their places of origin do so in an attempt to escape or forget their heritage. Conversely, I argue that some leave hoping to become something or someone else through new experiences of routed identity. Although this evolution in individual and communal culture and identity may lead to changes that can take away from the traditional lifestyles that those Indigenous to certain areas might have once known, they are also what make us, as individuals, so unique.

Prior to incorporating this roots/routes perspective, I believed that culture and identity stemmed solely from one place. I thought that when a person moved from one area to another, especially when the migration involved moving from rural to urban locations, people and

communities suffered. Upon adopting this perspective, however, and looking at my own migration pattern, I realized that I, too, represent the root/routes perspective. In fact, I am an exemplary candidate of Mesch and Manor (cited in Gustafson, 2001), who argued that place attachment can also be seen in those who are mobile.

I have lived in three areas that I would consider to be rural and one larger urban centre. Upon reflecting on where I have chosen to live while I have been mobile, it became apparent that I prefer to live in smaller, rural locations and that living in rural and urban centres has not dramatically changed who I am. My preference for rural settings is, no doubt, due to growing up in the small town of Sussex, New Brunswick. This point may also be the reason that my research interests are typically rooted in rural and Aboriginal geography as many of my fondest memories have taken place in small towns, or outside close to nature. Regardless of the biases that I held before this study began, I now believe social relationships and experiences are becoming dissociated from place. However, at this instance I do not believe that routes are more important than roots. Rather, the two perspectives complement each other. I would not have believed this to be the case prior to undertaking this research.

What was Researched and my Contribution to Knowledge

In researching the geographic parallels between small islands and small Aboriginal communities, I have contributed knowledge regarding the commonalities that have stemmed from various geographic settings and features. In doing so, I have added to the disciplines of Aboriginal Geography, Human Geography, Cultural Geography, Nissology, Sociology, and Anthropology.

In response to my research questions, the themes that emerged suggested that small islands and small and remote Aboriginal communities do share common geographic settings and features. Those common features included that they are bounded and finite spaces, being impacted by isolation, and being located in peripheral areas. As a human geographer and nissologist, I interpreted isolation as a unique factor that was beneficial to both islanders and Aboriginal people in Canada. The research presented in research question two suggests that this assumption appears to be correct. In response to my second research question, the thematic findings suggested that isolation allows for islanders and Aboriginal people alike to live in places where ethnic homogeneity is possible, place attachment is unique and important, and isolation allows for the preservation of culture and identity in such areas. Despite the negative consequences of being located in bound, isolated areas, which often leads to migration to urban areas, the ability of culture and identity to be preserved in such locations makes them unique and interesting places to study aspects of human geography.

The third research question that I posed dealt with negative outcomes stemming from isolation, such as mobility, and the necessity of migration. The emergent themes stemming from that research question were that migration, for both islanders and Aboriginal people, is often considered as a way to access increased opportunities. That being said, moving from small, isolated areas of the world, to those that are more densely populated, as well as diversely populated, creates shifts and losses of culture, identity, and place attachment. Along with this finding, many individuals choose to return home after experiencing some of the negative consequences of urban areas, and this point can also impact identity, culture, and a sense of belonging for many individuals.

The final question I posed was to determine whether there were commonalities between living on a small island and in an isolated Aboriginal community in Canada. As presented through the spatial metaphors that I chose to employ in the final section of chapter four, the parallels stemming from island living and living in an isolated Aboriginal community in Canada are numerous. This information suggests that perhaps Aboriginal communities are, in some ways, like small, unique metaphorical islands, located in Canada.

Limitations of this Study and their Implications

The conclusions that I have drawn from the research could be interpreted differently by other scholars, because there were limitations to the study that I conducted. Those limitations are presented in the following section. Firstly, I recognize that the metaphors employed in my research, as well as the conclusions that I have drawn, cannot be applied to *all* small islands, *all* waters, or *all* continents, nor do they represent *all* Aboriginal communities in Canada, *all* rural and isolated areas, or *all* urban or urban-like areas. The research that I conducted was completed, as stated in chapter one, under certain considerations. In the context of this research, this point means that I studied a broad area of inquiry, identifying key pieces of data and themes, the relationships between those themes, and the two geographic areas involved in this research.

As with most studies, my research could have been approached using different research methods, which could have potentially narrowed the topic further and involved case studies. That being said, based on the purpose of my research and the research method that I did choose to employ, narrowing the focus and purpose of my research would have made collecting data difficult because research comparing Aboriginal communities and small islands has not previously been conducted. Also, it is difficult to access a great deal of data pertaining to small,

isolated Aboriginal communities in Canada. Therefore, completing my research based on case studies of specific locations would not have been ideal.

In addition, the method of research synthesis involves analyzing existing, retrieval data related to a specific topic. It is likely that I did not locate every single source pertaining to Aboriginal geography and the geography of islands, especially due to the fact that I only sourced materials written in English, and there may be outliers that could have the potential to change the results and conclusions of my study. As well, I only had access to the library databases available through the libraries at the University of Prince Edward Island and Mount Allison University, which did not contain an exhaustive list of everything globally published on the topic. Furthermore, a study such as this could have benefited from the incorporation of participants from various islands of the world and Aboriginal communities in Canada. In doing so, various parameters could have been set in regards to the sizes and populations of each geographic setting involved, and case studies could have been incorporated into the research, which would have tailored the research for specific communities. That being said, the broad area of inquiry adopted for my thesis has provided useful information related to the study of small islands and Aboriginal issues in Canada, which brings me to the following section of my conclusion, titled Further Research.

Lastly, I acknowledge that I entered into this research with various biases. As a human geographer, I believe that all places shape and shift the cultures and identities of people. In the beginning, I saw these shifts in culture and identity as a negative aspect of migration and mobility. Also, having devoted a great deal of my academic career researching rural issues, I recognize that I, too, have a special attachment to small, isolated areas. In addition, I have also worked on-reserve and have friends who have migrated from their First Nations communities to

areas considered to be more urban-like, which also affects how I view and interpret certain aspects of Aboriginality and human geography. That being said, having incorporated my own experiences into this qualitative research, I attempted to provide a respectful space and place for Aboriginal people in my research. I have acknowledged that others could undertake this project and interpret the results much differently depending on their own experiences with various people, cultures, and places.

Further Research

In conducting this study, I discovered gaps in the literature, as well as useful ways that islands can be used to describe certain aspects of Aboriginal communities. Firstly, not only can islands be used to describe Aboriginal communities, but there is also the potential for someone to research the concept of Aboriginal communities in Canada to be used to describe islands. These landmasses share many geographic commonalities, and, therefore, it is possible that policies and resource management practices used by Aboriginal people in their own traditional communities could be advantageous to some islands and islanders as well. Also, scholars have written about networks of islands around the world. There is the potential to uncover such networks among Aboriginal communities, as well. One example of this type of network might include the establishment of the Idle no More movement, which took place while I was researching and writing this thesis. Idle no More brought together Aboriginal people and nations from around the country, and should this type of networking be further researched, there could be more commonalities between islands and Aboriginal communities.

The MIRAB/PROFIT Economic Model Connection.

Another very interesting study regarding the parallels of islands and Aboriginal communities, which could be very beneficial to Aboriginal people and communities, involves economic development of small islands. Nissologists have established two economic models; MIRAB, and PROFIT, which stand for Migrant/Remittances and Aid/Bureaucracy, and Resource Management, Overseas Engagement and Para-Diplomacy, Finance and Transportation.

The MIRAB model, created by Bertram and Watters in 1984, originated as an attempt to model the facts of contemporary economic development in several small Pacific islands (Bertram, 1986, 1987; Bertram & Watters, 1984, 1985, 1986; Watters, 1987). This model began with five island economies, which included the Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Kiribati, and Tuvalu (Bertram & Watters, 1984). When the study was initiated, those five islands "were emerging from the colonial era with a variety of constitutional arrangements, but with a common heritage of colonial welfarism" (Bertram, 2006, p. 1). In this particular model, the acronym represents MIgration/Remittances and Aid/Bureaucracy. In my own research, I suggest that this model, designed for small island development, has the potential to provide beneficial information to many Aboriginal communities, especially struggling First Nations communities, which are dependent upon aid and bureaucracy, suffer from severe out-migration, and survive on remittances from family members.

The MIRAB model has been heavily criticized over the past two and a half decades, because it does not seem to represent a sustainable model for islands. Poirine (1998) noted, "It does not seem right to live off international aid and migrant remittances" (p. 65). Along with this point, he also suggested that, "The common wisdom is that remittances and all intrafamily

transfers are motivated by purely altruistic motives, and as a result, are likely to decline as the altruistic feeling might weaken with years away from home" (p. 66). This point is true not just of islands, but also of Aboriginal communities in Canada, especially First Nations communities that have high rates of outmigration. As the research has shown, the longer someone is in an urban area or away from home, the more disconnected they are from their home communities (Corbett, 2007; Silver, 2006).

Similar to the statement that no two islands or Aboriginal communities are the same, not all islands can fit into only one development model. This point is the reason for the development of the PROFIT model. In 2006, Baldacchino wrote, "If MIRAB has real explanatory value, this does not necessarily mean that it is the only measure of small island development" (p. 5). His PROFIT model represents people, resource management, overseas engagement, finance, insurance, and taxation and is suited to islands that have significantly higher per capita incomes, as well as higher service employment, and lower unemployment rates as well as lower agricultural activity (Baldacchino, 2006). In these economies, one would find "a shrewd immigration and cyclical migration policy; engaging in tough external negotiations concerning the use of local mineral, natural, political and other imaginative resources; securing and controlling viable means of transportation; and luring foreign direct investment via very low/no tax regimes" (Baldacchino, 2006, p. 12). This model may be applicable in explaining the development of a number of Aboriginal communities that are becoming increasingly more self-reliant.

The main way in which Aboriginal communities are attempting to become more autonomous is through what is referred to as *own-source revenue*, commonly referred to as OSR. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (2012) stated that the purpose of

Canada's own-source revenue (OSR) policy was to take into consideration the capability of some self-governing groups to contribute to the expenses of their own local government activities when deciding upon the level of federal transfers, making them seem like they are moving towards a type of PROFIT economy. Through the research conducted, it seems that the majority of the communities who have sought to create their own revenues are located in the Western part of our country, in British Columbia. According to the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, a large portion of own-source revenue is from British Columbia First Nations.

Aboriginal Remittances

All this being said, before research regarding how these models might be able to shed insight into the economic issues facing Aboriginal communities in Canada, a significant gap in the literature pertaining to Aboriginal peoples and communities in Canada must be further explored. Through my research, I discovered that remittances by Aboriginal people back to their home communities, unlike remittances provided by islanders back to their small island communities, has not been researcher by scholars. Although the term remittances is normally reserved for the transfer of income between countries, this phenomenon may be just as important as a feature of economic and social development of Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal *Islanders* in Canada

Lastly, one interesting gap in the literature that I believe should be addressed is the issue referred to by John Crossley (1990) as *Aboriginal Islanders*. Crossley wrote an article over 20 years ago which stated, on the first page, that "even if we turn to unpublished and journalistic sources we find little attention paid to Island Indians ... popular press has generally ignored Island Natives" (p. 143). In 2000, 10 years after Crossley's initial observation, Peters (2000)

stated that there was still a lack of focus on contemporary Aboriginal issues, and I would argue that even today, 10 years after Peters' reflection, the lack of materials focusing on contemporary Aboriginal issues, with the exception of Aboriginal education, especially those involving Aboriginal islanders, is still lacking.

It is still difficult to locate information regarding Aboriginal people who live on islands. It seems that Aboriginal islanders, especially in a Canadian context, are identified in the literature as either Aboriginal or Islander, but not often are they recognized as both. Therefore, I question whether the experience of Aboriginal islanders has gone almost unnoticed. As a nissologist who studies human geography, I find this discovery very interesting, because there are many special cases in our country where islands or even archipelagos are inhabited by large populations of Aboriginal people, such as Haida Gwaii. The issue of being a nation within a nation, or an *Aboriginal island*[31] within an island presents an interesting dynamic, and I wonder if there is an added degree of isolation or preservation in these settings, or, conversely, whether these Aboriginal people are more welcome on islands by non-Aboriginal islanders?

Conclusion to the Chapter

Peters (2000) stated that it is often non-Aboriginal geographers who research Aboriginal Geographical issues. Similarly, Baldacchino (2008) stated, that "It is often outsiders–rather than insiders–who discover, investigate and proclaim [island] endemism and diversity to the rest of the world" (p. 38). There has been a tradition of non-Aboriginal people documenting their views regarding Aboriginal people, as well as other indigenous peoples, as "primitive, backwards, and often savage" (Peters, 2005b, p. 342). As a non-Aboriginal woman, I hope that

[31] By this I mean an Aboriginal community, which, for the purpose of my research, represents a type of island.

in conducting this research, I, conversely, have acted as an ally for Aboriginal people, as well as islanders and have appropriately supported the people represented in my research.

My research has shown that the data pertaining to small islands, as well as isolated Aboriginal communities in Canada, have much to offer one another, and I hope that the parallels that can be drawn between island living and living in an isolated Aboriginal community in Canada will cause those who read this thesis to think creatively. In doing so, it is possible that issues facing small islands, their inhabitants, and Aboriginal communities, as well as Aboriginal people, could be remedied in unique ways that have not previously been established by other scholars.

In the final section of this thesis, as is so often the case with other qualitative research, I present a personal reflection. I speak to what I have learned about myself, as an individual and a researcher, and also, what I have learned about the issues involved in my research. I conclude with a short paragraph, which details my identity, and, by doing so, it is my hope that those reading this final section will stop to reflect on their own identities and how they have been shaped as well.

Personal Reflection

From the writing of this Master of Arts thesis, I have recognized my own biases, which stem from my personal upbringing in a small, rural town, my experiences attending traditional powwow ceremonies in First Nation communities, as well as my experiences working in Aboriginal communities and my background in geography. From the experiences of conducting this study, I have come to realize that being a human geographer interested in culture and identity, as they stem from smaller, more rural places, I entered the research not realizing the full

potential of my own life experiences and research background. Also, having had to leave my own rural home town to access increased opportunities in areas that were considered to be more urban-like than rural, I realize now that, although I am a not an islander or an Aboriginal person in Canada, I am a person from a small, rural, Canadian community, and my culture and identity have also been shaped by my home and other geographic settings where I have lived over the years.

Throughout this study, I uncovered many similarities between islands and Aboriginal communities, as well as islanders and Aboriginal people in Canada. Being a non-Aboriginal researcher, who chose to research issues facing Aboriginal people in Canada, I faced several challenges, but was able to complete the research. Thankfully, I had many friends who identify as being Aboriginal, who also saw the validity in this research and encouraged me to continue. In doing so, I have made connections between the disciplines of island studies and Aboriginal studies, which can be mutually beneficial.

Several decades ago, the discipline of Island Studies was conceived, and it has proven to be very popular and useful offering the research world many unique and useful insights regarding various peoples, cultures, geographies, and economies. Also, the presence of various Aboriginal and Native Studies Departments in Canadian Universities represent the growing interest in Aboriginal issues in Canada. However, both Island Studies and the academic sub-discipline of Aboriginal geography do not seem popular among scholars and governments. I believe that this research proves that the discipline of Island Studies has much to offer to scholars not only of Aboriginal geographical issues, but also of Aboriginal issues in general. Furthermore, Aboriginal studies can be used to explain various other issues regarding geography and culture.

Although I do not identify as an Aboriginal person, I have been told that I am *Aboriginal in my heart*, and I believe that this stems from my initial experiences at that powwow in Eagle River those many years ago. That place, more than most that I have visited at this point in my life, remains very special to me, and I believe has shaped who I am today. What I have learned throughout this study is that everyone is influenced by place, whether he/she realizes it or not. As one respondent told Silver, Hay, and Gorzen (2006):

> Neighbours come and go, people come and go, the people you pass on the street come and go, that's life, you're going to meet people and pass them on the street, but that does not take away from who you are as a person, and that is very important because if you lose that then there really is no point in living because you've lost who you are as a person and so it doesn't matter who you are, whether you're rich, poor, white, black, always maintain your culture. (p. 51)

I will likely always identify as a small-town girl from Sussex, New Brunswick, but my culture and identity, which have been instilled in me by family members, friends, and place, as well as how I choose to identify myself, will forever grow and change, just like the landscape that Aboriginal peoples, farmers, islanders, and many others depend on to provide them with a familiarity and place that they can forever call home.

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